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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHURCH UNITY

Christian Liberty and Church Unity

By

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παρεκτὸς τῶν δεσμῶν τούτων.—ACTS 26: 29.



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To
My Wife
ALICE M. C. SCHERER

PREFACE

THERE is no subject in which people are more interested to-day than liberty. This interest accounts in great measure for the stir which we are witnessing in India, in China, in Russia, and in varying form and degree in every civilized country of the globe. People desire freedom from unrighteous authority, or from what they conceive to be such, from an evil environment, from interferences with happiness which seem to them to have no other support than tradition and convention, from an evil cosmos and a Power that rules over it without conspicuous success. They seek it in different ways and by divers means; by simple rebellion against every authority, by mystical contemplation, by asceticism, by conformity to prescribed rules, by altruistic and philanthropic activities. Yet there is nothing that is so evasive as the liberty which men seek. Nothing is so baffling to all their powers. This little book commends a way which the author believes will not be disappointing; and it is sent forth with the prayer that one soul, if only one, may find liberty.

Another subject which in our time is engaging the thought of Christians of every name as, perhaps, never before is Christian Unity. In the latter half of the book there is an attempt toward the correlation of these two ideas.

The book is intended to be of widest service. Apology must be made to the reader who is seeking only the way of peace, that at a few places here and there he will find himself led into the midst of a skirmish.

M. G. G. S.

CONTENTS

I

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

I.	INTRODUCTORY. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IN HISTORY	13
II.	THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY . . .	26
III.	THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (continued)	36
IV.	HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IS OBTAINED . . .	46
V.	HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BEHAVES . . .	55
VI.	HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BEHAVES (continued)	68

II

CHURCH UNITY

VII.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY .	87
VIII.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY (continued)	97
IX.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE	112
X.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATION	140
XI.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND PRIESTHOOD . . .	161
XII.	CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CATHOLICITY . . .	183
	INDEX	200

I

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

I

INTRODUCTORY—CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IN HISTORY

THERE have been times when Christian Liberty was something new for men to think about, times when it was a live subject and when it was proclaimed and defended in the face of great dangers. The word was on Jesus' lips from early in His ministry, and how highly He thought of it may be seen by noting the things with which He classed it, and which He declared that He had been anointed and sent to preach and to do. He had been anointed and sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that were bruised.¹

And on that very occasion Jesus exercised the liberty which He was preaching by telling the people of the despised little town of Nazareth what no other teacher would have dared to tell them for fear of being mobbed. When some of them began to speak depreciatingly of Him as being nobody but the son of Joseph, whom they knew well as the village carpenter, He reminded them of what had happened to Israel in the days gone by, when they refused to hear their proph-

¹ Luke 4: 18.

ets; how not one of the many famine stricken widows in the land was visited by Elijah, but only a widow in the far-away heathen city of Sarepta; and how not one of the many lepers in Israel was healed by Elisha, but only Naaman, the Syrian. It would not be a strange thing, He intimated, if Nazareth, His home town, should be so passed by; and if others should receive the benefits which the Prophet of Nazareth had to bestow upon the people of Nazareth. They understood Him, and were enraged and sought to hurl Him down from the brow of the hill on which their city was built and dash Him to death. Other Rabbis would not have forgotten that the Israelites prided themselves on being the chosen people of God, and would not have stirred these "children of Abraham" to indignation by awakening their fanatical zeal for their own proud eminence as a nation. But Jesus had been sent to preach deliverance and to set people at liberty; and He could make no better beginning than to show that He, at least, would not be bound by the chains of national prejudice and human tradition which had held His people captive through so many centuries. Therefore He spoke as the Prophet of Liberty. Of course there was a much deeper significance in His words than that just indicated. But so much at least was plain.

On another occasion in Jerusalem Jesus spoke of the richest blessing of this liberty which He came to give, and involved Himself in a controversy with the Jews which ended in their attempting to stone Him. The beginning of the trouble was when He uttered the words: "If ye continue in my word then are ye my

disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”² Instantly they boiled over. Their indignant reply was characteristic: “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; and how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” Evidently they did not understand the freedom of which He spoke, namely, freedom from the bondage of sin. And as evidently they were foolishly choking their throats with falsehood when they said they had never been in bondage.

The Christian message, The Gospel, as it was delivered at the beginning, abounds with instances in which Jesus did the work of a Liberator. “He healed many that were sick of divers diseases and cast out many devils.”³ Unto a man who was sick of the palsy He said: “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house. And he arose and departed to his house.” In this case He proclaimed Himself also as the Liberator from spiritual bondage, saying to the man: “Thy sins be forgiven thee.”⁴

Stephen suffered martyrdom by stoning at the hands of his own people, the Jews, for no other reason than that he taught in such a way as that he was accused of speaking “blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law,” saying that “Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”⁵ A martyr to Christian faith and liberty, to his acceptance of Christ as the Liberator from all the traditions of a hoary past.

² John 8: 31, 32.

³ Mark 1: 34.

⁴ Matt. 9: 2-7.

⁵ Acts 6: 13, 14.

Christian liberty was a favourite subject also with St. Paul. He was ever in battle in defense of it. It was of this that he was speaking when, writing to the Corinthians, he asked with rhetorical emphasis, "Am I not free?", and with equal emphasis answered, "I am free from all men."⁶ This it was that thrilled his heart when he wrote: "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."⁷ And not only did Paul prize this new found liberty of his as a treasure of exceeding value to himself, but he used the utmost persuasion to induce all those who had been called "into the grace of Christ" to abide therein: "For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."⁸

Likewise St. Peter, while exhorting Christians to submit themselves to every ordinance of kings and of those who were in authority, bids them do it "for the Lord's sake," and would not have them forget that even in this submission they are to think of themselves "as free,"⁹ and as using their liberty for the purpose of commending the Gospel of their Lord and Saviour.

After the days of the Apostles not much was written on this vital theme of the liberty of the believer in Christ Jesus; or, if written, it was not preserved. St. Augustine, and others before and after him, wrote much in a philosophical way about the freedom of the will, but we find very little on Christian liberty, in the sense in which it is presented in the writings of St.

⁶ I Cor. 9: 1, 19.

⁷ Rom. 8: 2.

⁸ Gal. 5: 1 R. V.

⁹ I Peter 2: 15, 16.

Paul, until Luther, in the year 1520, published that classic of his, *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*. The reason for this remarkable silence presents an interesting study; and it is not difficult, nor far to seek. Several factors enter into the explanation of it.

In the first place, Christian liberty was an entirely new concept; so that it may be said without much hesitancy that even those apostles who accompanied our Lord and heard His words did not at first have a very clear understanding of what it meant. Some of them probably never did understand it quite well. If this was true of them, much more would it be true of the multitude of those who believed and were incorporated into the Church.

It might have been and doubtless was foreseen from the very beginning by some choice spirits within the Church who were "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," as well as by the keenest and most observant of those without, that here was a thought and a claim that would challenge critical examination, and which would not find universal acceptance even among Christians. It was something that was foreign to the religious thought and life of the whole world, Jewish and pagan alike.

The Jews thought of everything in a national way. This was true of religion as well as of politics. As they believed, the nation could never fulfil its proper destiny, as the chosen people of God, without their own king of the royal line of David. Only in that way could they make progress under their own laws and customs. This thought was ever dominant in the

minds of the people. It was that which led to the bewilderment of John the Baptist as he languished in prison and Jesus brought him no deliverance. It was that thought which swayed the multitude when they wanted to take Jesus and by force made Him a king. They were moved by the same impulse when, on the occasion of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they cried: "Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord." Even the apostles whom He had chosen were under the spell of this idea to the very day of His ascension. There on the Mount of Olives they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"¹⁰

The Jews were just as nationalistic in religion as they were in politics. It was almost impossible for them, with the training they had received, to think of any good thing coming out of any religion but that of the fathers; or to believe that God would withhold from them any blessing whatsoever if they would strictly conform to the law of Moses. That was the *ne plus ultra* as a means of obtaining the divine favour, and the stricter the obedience the better. We can well understand that for the freedom which Christ and the Gospel offered they felt no need, and especially that they should be hostile to the idea of any religious good being brought to them in any other way than through their own ancient and national modes of worship. That Jesus should give them freedom without the law and even from the law, as was insistently urged by Paul, was nothing less than blasphemy. The Jews as

¹⁰ Acts 1: 6.

a people could do nothing but fight such a doctrine and stone those who preached it.

Nor is it surprising that the Jewish Christians did not take cordially to this new teaching, but persistently followed it up everywhere with their Judaizing interpretations and with their efforts to combine the Gospel with the old law, in other words, to use the old wine skins for the new wine. Paul and those of like faith with him did not succeed in turning the Jewish Christians away from their old ideas about Moses and the law, and winning them over to the new freedom. The influence of the Jewish element in the Church, in so far as it exerted an influence, was ever in the direction of making the Gospel a new law. After the days of the apostles, there were no great Christian writers of Jewish birth; and if there had been, it is safe to say that they would not have been defenders of the liberty proclaimed in the Gospel, as over against the Judaizing tendencies which Paul had to combat. The probability is that they would have given new impulse to those tendencies. This line of thought would seem to be borne out by the fact that after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple conversion to Christianity among the Jews became ever more difficult until it practically ceased. After that event the Jews could not so easily think of conversion to Christianity as being reconcilable with fidelity to the national religion. To them Christ has always been a "stumbling stone, and rock of offence;" ¹¹ and when the temple was gone everything was gone—Christianity along with it.

¹¹ Rom. 9: 33.

From this side, therefore, we could not expect to find in the early literature of the Church much written in support of the Gospel liberty.

If we turn now to the Gentile element which poured in from all sides until the Church was Gentile in its composition and in its leadership, the situation becomes somewhat more complex and the soil hardly more promising for the new plant of Christian liberty than Judaism had proven to be.

In an effort to estimate the receptivity of the Greco-Roman world to the Gospel and the freedom which it proffered it would be necessary to consider a number of elements which entered as constituent parts into that variegated civilization. Only a very brief outline can here be attempted. Chief among those elements were the philosophical mental mode of the time represented by the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Cynics; the attitude of the learned on the one hand, and of the multitude on the other, toward the various forms of religious thought and worship then in vogue; the ethical ideals and the moral decadence of the age; the almost worshipful esteem in which the state was held by some and the cringing awe of others; and, alongside of these, the nature of the new Gospel itself and of the things it proposed for the acceptance of mankind.

It is true, as has been often stated, that the Greco-Roman civilization contributed in several respects to prepare the way for the Gospel; it is also true that the Greek modes of thought and forms of expression served as the ready means for presenting Christian truth in a way commending it to the intellectual regard of men.

But it would be very far from truth to suppose that that civilization had in any way predisposed the pagan world in favour of the Gospel and its message of grace. The truth is that it brought the heralds of the cross face to face with new and peculiar difficulties. Here they had to meet the sophisticated of the earth; and if to the Jews the preaching of the cross was a stumbling block, to the Greeks it was foolishness. The loss of faith in the popular mythologies doubtless became as often an obstacle to the acceptance of the new claimant as it did an inducement. How very likely the conclusion, from the point of view of the time, that Christianity was only another "superstition," as it was contemptuously designated by Pliny the Younger in that letter to the Emperor Trajan. If philosophy forged the implements for treating with and of the Christian ideas intellectually and scientifically, it also in a way prejudiced the minds of the sophisticated against the new religion. The latter made too little of man's wisdom and power, and too much of the dogma that salvation is a free gift of God, a gift of grace of which man becomes the beneficiary through faith in Christ Jesus. The ground principle of philosophy at its best was that man is, or must become, his own Saviour. No other way had found place in the thought of those who followed it. If they spoke of redemption, it was not conceived of as the act of another; it came only through knowledge; as man rises to the knowledge and understanding of the world he also rises above it and is freed from it. Thus he does not need a Liberator, a Saviour.

The Christian Gospel was an exotic in the world. It is nothing else than that which we should have expected when we hear Paul reminding the Corinthian "brethren" that "not many wise men after the flesh" were called.¹² It was to fishermen and men of their class intellectually that Christ first addressed Himself; and it was among them, not among men of culture like Nicodemus, that He sought for disciples. And it was the humbler folk represented by tradesmen, handicraftsmen and menials, whose minds were not given to philosophical speculations, that were most receptive to the Gospel and constituted most largely the membership of the churches.

Philosophy first began to take an active interest in Christianity when Gnosticism arose early in the second century. The principal Gnostic groups were philosophical sects who would not deign to accept Christianity as a substitute for their own speculations, but who sought rather to make use of it in so far as it might be of service to them in their search for Truth. They had no proper conception of the liberty that is in Christ, because they failed to comprehend Him and His work. Some of the Gnostics, especially those of Alexandrian origin, lapsed into antinomianism. This was due in part to their hostility to Judaism. Others, influenced by Eastern dualistic conceptions, according to which spirit and matter constitute an antithesis, turned to asceticism, which is essentially a form of legalism, in order thereby to purify themselves from the evil which has its source in matter. Between these two, legalism

¹² I Cor. 1: 26.

and antinomianism both broadly comprehended, lies true Christian liberty. Extravagancies were inherent in Gnosticism; it did not have within it the liberty which is in Christ Jesus. Therefore it did not and could not make any contribution to the literature of the subject.

Returning now from the Gnostics to philosophy proper, enough has been said above to show that the new evangelical idea of liberty could hardly come to terms with philosophy without suffering some modification. It is not philosophical. When philosophy, conscious of its own insufficiency, turned to the Gospel it did not at once forsake its own genius. It did not whole-heartedly embrace the Gospel as logically and truly developed in the writings of St. Paul; neither did the Christian writers who were philosophically minded, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Indeed, philosophy has never ceased to exert its influence in the Church and upon Christian thinkers and writers; and in so far as its voice has been followed it has led away from "the simplicity which is in Christ"¹³ and has despoiled men of that freedom which is the birth-right of every believer. The Gospel remains an exotic to this day inasmuch as it assumes man's insufficiency and proclaims liberty through the grace of God alone.

The first great Christian scholar after Paul who may be said to have completely freed himself from the trammels of philosophy, and who was thoroughly committed to the doctrine of the deity of Christ and of salvation through forgiveness of sins, was Athanasius

¹³ II Cor. 11: 3.

(ob. 373). But Athanasius was too much taken up with his controversy against Arianism to devote much time to writing upon the subject of the freedom that men have in Christ. Besides, he was a warm advocate of monasticism, and as such would not be likely to stress an idea so utterly opposed thereto.

Augustine (ob. 430), especially in his polemics against Pelagianism, in his writings on moral subjects and in his Confessions, came nearer to the Christian conception of freedom than any other of the Church Fathers. It was all there in his doctrine of grace, although by his doctrine of an absolute predestination grace could be effective only in the elect. Yet, even so, there is no clear and ample presentation in his writings of the freedom which pertains to the elect. His doctrine of grace concerned itself particularly with the question of man's salvation, how it is possible for him to be saved from the death of sin; it denies all power to man and makes his salvation depend from first to last absolutely upon the grace of God. His fight, however, was against synergism, or the doctrine of man's coöperation with God in conversion. It was not his purpose primarily in any of his writings to secure Christian consciences against the shackles of a legalistic order, or to show the abounding riches of the grace of Christ in the heart of the believer. Besides, Augustine was a true son of the Church, and with it the "babylonian captivity"¹⁴ had already set in. In fact Augustine was, perhaps unwittingly, leading the

¹⁴ The reference is to Luther's treatise on "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520).

way into it. "His doctrine of the Church he received whole from his predecessors, and he gave it merely the precision and vitality which ensured its persistence."¹⁵ As bishop he "constituted his clergy into a kind of monastic community (*monasterium clericorum*)."¹⁶ It was he who first propounded the doctrine of purgatory. In his dealings with the Donatists who persisted in their fanaticism, while at first he endeavoured by gentle treatment to induce them to return to the Church, finding that this would not avail, he at last came to the position that force might be used against them to bring them back to obedience. Augustine was no precursor of Luther in advocacy of that liberty which makes the Christian man the freest of all in the world.

The bondage which had begun so early in the history of the Church was not broken nor alleviated through the centuries that followed until the Reformation. All things worked together to add to the weight of the bondage and to bind it more tightly upon the consciences of those who ought to have been permitted to rejoice in the liberty which was theirs through faith in Christ. Among the forces which thus combined to neutralize the principle of Christian liberty and to enmesh the whole of life in a system of legalism were the doctrine of priesthood, the hierarchy, the papacy, monasticism, penance, purgatory, masses and the whole conception of salvation for man by his own works and satisfactions.

¹⁵ "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics," Vol. 2, p. 224.

¹⁶ Kurtz's Church History.

With his Treatise on Christian Liberty in mind and in course of preparation, Luther could truthfully say, at the end of his book on "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church": "The remainder I will publish ere long, and it will, please Christ, be such as the Roman See has hitherto neither seen nor heard."

II

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

THE subject of Christian Liberty has been far more vital since Luther's time than it was before. Many books have been written upon it, in whole or in part; and in some parts of the Church at least it is an oft recurring topic, frequently recognized only with a courteous gesture, in sermon, in religious essay, and in the literature of devotion. But more is needed. On account of institutionalism, and of the veil of Mosaic legalism which blinds the minds of so many earnest but misguided souls, on account of the pagan antinomianism or moral laxity which prevails, on account of the drift to humanism so characteristic of our time, there is urgent need of a restudy and a new appreciation of this subject. For Christian liberty rightly understood and producing its proper effects in the life is as much a corrective of antinomian and purely individualistic tendencies as it is the preservative against ecclesiasticism, legalism and human self-sufficiency.

What, then, is Christian liberty? It is a life; or, perhaps, it were nearer the mark to say that it is the chief attribute of a distinctive life, namely, that of the real Christian. Luther, when he sent his little book on Christian Liberty to Pope Leo X, said of it in his accompanying letter: "Unless I am deceived, it is the whole of Christian living in brief form, if thou wilt grasp its meaning." In saying this he had in mind not his own art as displayed in the book, but the "spiritual gift" itself which he sought to bring within the grasp of men by means of the book.

When we speak of the distinctive life of the real Christian, it is necessary to follow with two explanations. In the first place, it must be said that the word "real" is not to be understood as implying perfection of character in any sense or degree. If we should call for a perfect Christian to stand forth, we would promptly label the first one who might arise as a fool or a knave. But there are many real Christians; people who are not self-righteous and who make no claim to righteousness in and of themselves, but who know and with sorrow confess themselves sinners in thought, word and deed, and who believe that they have forgiveness of all sin for Christ's sake and that in Him they are accounted and are righteous before God. These are *real* Christians, though they are fully aware that in themselves they fall far short and are obliged to say with Paul: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."¹ In the second place, the distinctive life of the real Christian is to be found

¹ Rom. 7: 18.

not so much in the things which he does or does not do, but rather in that which is new at the heart and center of his whole being and which gives new direction to the course of his life. It is "a new creature."² This, of course, cannot be seen any more than the life of the body; but that it is there becomes manifest in the consciousness of the Christian and, in proportion as it is vigorous and strong, in a newness observable by others in his disposition and actions. That which is new and distinctive in the Christian is "that which is born of the Spirit."³ It is the Spirit given, Spirit maintained and Spirit ruled life; and herein lies its distinctive quality. And Christian liberty is an attribute of this life which is not apart from but by the Spirit dwelling within; and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."⁴

The freedom of the Christian pertains directly and immediately to the soul or spirit. It is the spirit that takes cognizance of it, rejoices in it and uses it. It is a spiritual liberty. Its opposite is spiritual bondage, a bondage affecting the spirit and imposed by spiritual shackles; such as, an external statutory law, human authority and enactments in matters relating to the spirit, opinions and traditions of men, sin, condemnation, fear and every evil which distresses and torments the soul. Bodily conditions have nothing whatever to do with Christian liberty, so far as its birth and its inner life are concerned. Of course, in this life the soul, on account of its union with the body whose powers it uses in many ways, cannot manifest itself in

² Gal. 6: 15.³ John 3: 6.⁴ II Cor. 3: 17.

bodily activities when the body is bound; but even in such plight there is a freedom in the Christian soul of which no bodily circumstance or condition can deprive it. For the time, one may not be able to use his liberty to the full; he may not go where he would or do the things which life and love prompt him to do, but his liberty is with him and he knows it. Furthermore, he can exercise his liberty in accepting the restraints, of whatsoever kind they may be, and showing that he knows and rejoices in his freedom, though he cannot now do with it all that he would do if the body were as free and untrammelled as the soul. Even so Paul, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" and "an ambassador in bonds," was full of thanksgiving and praise, and wrote to the Philippians saying: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." The one great cause that concerned him most was "the furtherance of the gospel" of liberty. The slave at his task may be conscious of a freedom that his master does not know. The invalid upon his bed of pain may have a song and a smile that would better beseem the child of buoyant health. The swain toiling at his work from dawn to dark and held thereto by the necessity of earning daily bread for himself and his dependents may have a spirit more lithesome and free than that of the wealthy landlord whose every wish is waited on by a faithful servant, whose soft hands have never touched tool or spade, and whose life is altogether one of ease and comfort. While the freedom of the Christian is not confined in its efficacy to the spirit, nevertheless it begins there and permanently resides in

the spirit. Therefore, it is not dependent for its being, or for its most intimate movement, upon bodily condition. It pertains exclusively to the realm of religion and ethics; and, while it may not yield all that men seek for, it gives a rest and strength that cannot be found in anything else.

In order fully to appreciate his liberty the Christian must know what it is, wherein it consists, what its scope, and that it is surely his. If he doubts of it—well, he doubts, and he has yet to learn rightly the one essential of his having it; namely, faith in Christ, to which statement fuller consideration will be given in the proper place.

The liberty of the Christian is first of all freedom from sin. So far as man is concerned, sin is the deepest, the most complete, the most oppressive and cruel bondage that he can know, simply because it enslaves and tyrannizes over the secret springs of his life. This is true of all those who admit the existence of sin and whose conscience is alive to its presence. Sin is the "heart's core" of Evil. It is sin that makes one guilty before God and brings him under condemnation; and it is the knowledge of sin that leaves one with a sense of guilt and stops his mouth toward God, so that he can neither excuse himself nor trust in God and be thankful to Him. From all of these pains and inhibitions the Christian has a perfect title to freedom. It is securely his, though it is possible that he does not know it or enjoy its benefits to the full.

The freedom from sin in which the Christian rejoices does not blot out the sin that is in him by nature,

nor the acts of sin which have been committed by him, so that he can say, "I have no sin."⁵ He would hardly wish it so. Better is it for him to know that he has a gracious God who forgives his sins, "not imputing"⁶ his trespasses unto him, whose heart is that of a Father who loves a wayward child. The Christian's freedom releases him from the horrid entanglements and confusion into which sin has thrown him—the condemnation, the death and hell and all the power of Satan, and puts a song in his mouth that angels cannot sing: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we are escaped."⁷

*'Tis not all we owe to Jesus;
It is something more than all;
Greater good because of evil,
Larger mercy through the fall.*

This freedom which is the proper element of the Christian, the element in which his life belongs and in which he is at home, liberates him from the power of sin, because it turns the love of sin into hate of it and gives the heart's love to Christ, the Liberator. Thus:

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free.*

The soul that breathes the fresh, healthy, life-giving air of this freedom is immune from the attacks of remorse and deadly despair. It must have sorrow and

⁵ I John 1: 8.

⁶ II Cor. 5: 19.

⁷ Psalm 124: 7.

deep humiliation now and then on account of clinging weaknesses or, may be, up-surfing sins and riotous passions; but this sorrow in truth brings comfort to the soul, for in it the soul turns in faith to its ever merciful Lord for deliverance, and is saved from despair. The sorrow of the soul, brought for the moment into captivity to the law of sin, is turned into rejoicing in the full consciousness of its freedom. It is a godly sorrow, rising out of love to God and not out of the sin, though on account of the sin; and it is a repentance unto salvation, that is, unto a freedom in which there is no sorrow or occasion for it, but only joy.

The liberty of the Christian involves also his freedom from the Law, that is, from all that is of the nature of external restraint or command. He is not under bondage to any of it. Indeed, he is not free from sin if he is not also free from the law; for "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."⁸ But not one has kept, or keeps, or can keep, the law and the Commandments, except Jesus only who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."⁹ But His fulfilment of the law cannot be interpreted to mean that we also can keep it inviolate. Neither does it mean that by His keeping of it He was showing us the way by which we are to free ourselves from sin. If that was what He meant to do He was not only repeating the law of Moses, but laying it upon us with refinements and delicacies of application, as in the Sermon on the Mount, which make it all the more

⁸ Rom. 7: 12.

⁹ Heb. 7: 26.

hopeless that we should ever fulfil its requirements and attain to freedom from sin. The only possible way to freedom from sin is by freedom from the law; and that is what the Christian, the believer, has. The apostle Paul condensed it all in those few words of his: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace."¹⁰ And St. John says: "The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."¹¹ In the divine plan for restoring man to a state of innocence or freedom from sin Christ was the last Man under the law. And He was there for us. He was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."¹² The reign of the law ended with Him for all those who would seek deliverance from sin in God's way. That must be the ultimate meaning of His fulfilment of the law; it was to free us from it, so that we might have righteousness through grace for His sake.

The Christian thus sustains an altogether new relation to the law. He is free from it, so that it cannot start a rough-house in his soul and clamour against him until he is filled with dismay and driven to despair. It is not for the law any longer to condemn the Christian, or to rend his heart with fear until it mutters condemnation against itself. God who has given him freedom is greater than the law and greater than the mutinous heart, and He knows all. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."¹³ They are not under the law. Rather, they walk hand in hand with the law. They use it instead

¹⁰ Rom. 6: 14.

¹¹ John 1: 17.

¹² Gal. 4: 4.

¹³ Rom. 8: 1.

of being used and driven by it. The law is for them, not they for the law. Their freedom from it gives them freedom in it, with delight.

It must have occurred to the humble Christian reader before this that his own experience does not fully corroborate this doctrine of the Gospel concerning freedom. He is too conscious of guilt. And most certain it is that we can never truthfully say that "we have no sin" or that "we have not sinned." Neither can we say that the law has no meaning for us, that it does not touch us at many points, that it does not urge or restrain us betimes with its "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not"; and we cannot say that the law permits us to felicitate ourselves upon our good life, or to say of the Commandments, "All these have I kept." How then can we say that we are free from the law and from sin, especially from the power of sin? The answer is, that this freedom is ours in a twofold way. First, it is ours by purchase. Christ has redeemed us; the purchase is complete. He gives it, we receive it, and there is no one to dispute our title. We may always claim this freedom as our own, even against heart and conscience and law. But in the second place, this freedom is ours as we assert it and use it. In this respect we are not quite adept and are far from being always successful. Of this no one need tell us; we ourselves are the best witnesses. Our sins cling to us, and because they are ours and seem so grievous they are apt to absorb our attention to such a degree that Christ the Liberator fades out of view. While this condition lasts our experience cannot be that of a joyful freedom.

Nevertheless, the freedom is ours to claim at any time and ours to demonstrate in action. And so it is with the law. Although the law has been fulfilled for us it is ever pressing for fulfilment in our own lives; and because we so often fail here the law accuses us, and accuses us so sharply that we sometimes almost forget who is our LORD and think that we are again under the law. This is an unhappy experience, more like the old bondage than the new freedom; and it will continue until by repentance and faith in Christ there arises within us again the assurance of His favour and we triumph in Him over sin and the law and exultantly ask, Where O Sin, O Law, is thy victory?

And so we have our ups and downs, our downs and ups; and because of the frailty of our nature this fluctuating experience will be ours more or less as long as we live. Yet our freedom is never lost. Those who put their trust in Christ are in His keeping and He has said: "They shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."¹⁴

Thus far we have been considering the subject of Christian liberty only from the point of view of the Christian's relation to God and the things of God. His freedom extends, however, to all human relations, to men and opinions, to individuals and groups, to authorities and traditions, to rules and regulations, to everything that is arbitrarily imposed from without. Of these matters we will speak in a subsequent chapter. But Christian liberty is not only a gift passively received, which brings to the recipient deliverance and

¹⁴ John 10: 28.

divine comfort; it is also an active principle, and as such it deals with questions and situations here in the world in its own characteristic and unique way. Of this we shall treat in the following chapter.

III

THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

(Continued)

BEFORE entering upon the discussion of Christian liberty in its outward relations it seems needful and in order, that some further consideration be given to the question how this liberty holds good for the Christian in face of the experiences of his own inner life. With these experiences he has constantly to reckon.

What, then, shall we say of him when he stands accused before the bar of his own conscience? If in this case his freedom does not avail him, it fails him in his deepest need. But it does not fail him here. His conscience may accuse and convict him, but it is not his judge. It cannot excuse him or grant him a dispensation; neither can it condemn him. He has another Judge, even Christ Jesus who died and rose again, "who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."¹ His whole life is Christ-centered, so that he takes thought of himself only as in

¹ Rom. 8: 34.

Him, and to those who are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. With Paul that was the end of the whole matter with any who might call in question his faithfulness as a steward of the divine mysteries. "With me," said he, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord."²

To Him who came to make men free all judgment has been committed. Even conscience must leave off its accusations and become silent when Jesus speaks the word of acquittal. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."³

But how about those native instincts, appetites, desires and passions which are not wrong in themselves when held to the purpose for which they were implanted, but which so easily break through all bounds and lead to excesses which are sinful? Is the Christian a free man in regard to these? No man is a slave to these because he has them. He who lacks them is negative; he is neuter; he is as good as dead for all the purposes of life in the world. He cannot answer to the divine purposes of his creation. These are among the natural endowments given to man by his Creator, and they are good. This is true of the Christian also. Christianity does not undo a man, but makes him whole in every part, so that he may glorify God in his body as well as in his spirit. He has full freedom, therefore, to use all of his natural endow-

² I Cor. 4: 3, 4 R. V.

³ John 8: 36.

ments and all the gifts of God for the purposes for which God gave them, always remembering that the chief purpose of his whole life is to glorify God, according to that word, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."⁴ This, of course, has wide implications, and requires that the Christian take thought not only of himself and God, but of himself and his fellowman, and also of his fellowman in relation to God. This will call for self-restraint and self-control on the part of the Christian in the use of those natural endowments which were bestowed upon all men for good. And this involves no infringement of his liberty; for in thus controlling and directing his powers to high and holy ends he does that which the new spirit that is in him moves him to do; he follows his own best desire, and acts altogether freely. Furthermore, in proportion as he brings his powers under control and makes them serve to the glory of God and to the promotion of "peace among men in whom he is well pleased,"⁵ he is free lord in his own house, even over these somewhat spirited elements of his being. When he fails to exercise lordship here he sins, and must have recourse to Christ whose glory it is to free from sin alway and to restore that which has suffered injury.

We pass on now to the consideration of Christian liberty in its active character, as it seeks and finds expression in the life. For it means not simply the loosing of the prisoner, the release of the soul from all coercion and from the fear of doom; but it gives a

⁴ I Cor. 10: 31.

⁵ Luke 2: 14.

changed outlook Godward and manward, also new affections and desires corresponding with the new view of life.

When one has received this freedom from the hand of God he has also received with it the status of a son. He knows this his new status, and he no longer cringes or sulks in the presence of God, or goes about in slavish fear; rather he looks up with confidence and rejoices in heart to say, Abba, Father. As a son he loves God; this he could not do before. The conception that he had of God was that which was borne in upon him from Mount Sinai,—a God to be afraid of and to hide one's face from, whose countenance wore a frown and whose word was a two-edged sword, whose presence was a consuming fire and his service an intolerable bondage. The deepest yearning of the soul under such a view of God could be voiced only in words like these: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"⁶

But the Christian sees God as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, as He manifested Himself to the world on Calvary. That was love, God's love for sinners condescending to the utmost; and "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."⁷ "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,"⁸ in order that reconciled they might draw near to Him, love Him, worship Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, and rejoice to know and do His will.

God is love; and as soon as the soul of a man per-

⁶ Psalm 139: 7.

⁷ I John 3: 16.

⁸ II Cor. 5: 19.

ceives this great truth, as fully revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, he will no more rend his clothes, put on sackcloth and go softly before God; he will leap and rejoice to meet Him in closest fellowship, for he loves God, and his love casts out all fear and everything else that would shut God out of the heart or dispute His supremacy there. And now he is ready to begin to live and to do from a new motive, the only motive indeed that can give one freedom of action where the will of another has to be taken into account.

Love is an active principle, and freedom is its essential attribute. It cannot be forced into being by any command or exercise of authority. Any attempt to do this must not only fail, but will of itself awaken antipathy. Forced action is always unwilling action. Love is spontaneous and free; yet it is not without its *raison d'être*. It does not spring forth from the heart uninvoked. It comes at the call of love; and so, "we love, because he first loved us."⁹

As love cannot be forced, neither can it be bound nor lie asleep. It must speak and act, for to do so is the very breath of its life. The only restraints which love knows are self-imposed, and they belong to love's finest blossom. They are those which withhold one from sin against God and unbrotherly conduct toward one's neighbour.

The wonderful change which is recorded in the experience of the soul that believes may be described by such mutations as these: from bondage to liberty, from the status of a servant to that of a son, from slavish

⁹ I John 4: 19.

fear to the spirit of sonship or filial love. When this change has taken place in one he has an entirely new attitude toward God and all that is of God. He looks unto God as to his Father, calls upon Him in every time of need, seeks communion with Him in prayer, lifts up his heart in praise and thanksgiving for the love that He continually bestows, trusts Him when ills betide, and casts all his care upon Him.

For the believer the will of God is the Father's will, whether it evoke joy and gladness or call upon him to take up the cross. Not because he cannot help himself when he faces the inevitable, but because the free spirit that is in him inclines him thereto he submits himself to the Father's will and prays, "Thy will be done." Yea, he earnestly desires to know what God's will is for him in each and every event of life, so that he may faithfully fulfil the same in love and praise and thus prove his sonship.

The word of God is the Father's word, in command as well as in promise. In Christ the believer sees the living Word of God, and in the Living Word he sees God as Love. In Christ every word of God is a word of love. "God is one."¹⁰ He is not against Himself; He is not one thing in the promise and another in the commandment. He is always love. The law is not against the promise therefore; in giving commandment God was seeking the same end which He sought in the promise and in the gift of His Son. Thus, looking at all in Christ, even the Commandments of God are seen to be words of love. The meaning and intent of God

¹⁰ Gal. 3: 20.

in every word of His is the same as that which is made known in the Word Incarnate.

And so even in the commandment the call of love comes, as the believer now knows and understands; and his obedience is that of a responding love and not that which is prompted by fear. It is not a forced, but a free obedience. All that he does in accordance with the law of God is the deed of a son who wishes to please God rather than an observance of commandments to avert the divine wrath. His service is a service of love and gratitude, a joyous exercise of his Christian liberty, and is altogether incompatible with the spirit of legalism. We "have been called unto liberty."¹¹ St. Clement of Rome beautifully calls our yoke "the yoke of His grace."¹²

On the other hand the principle of Christian liberty is as far removed from antinomianism as it is from legalism. It by no means bids defiance to the law or sets it aside as useless even for the believer. The Christian always regards the law, in its real meaning, as a rescript of the Father's good and gracious will, in which he may read and know always that which is right and pleasing in the sight of God. He loves it, therefore, as he loves the Father. He knows that it is holy, just and good, and that in keeping it he cannot do that which is wrong or displeasing to God, or which does violence to his own conscience or to the just claims of his fellowmen. He desires to know and understand the law in its application to his own way in the sight of God, and always rejoices when he can say

¹¹ Gal. 5: 13.

¹² I Ep. to the Corinthians, Chap. XVI.

with the Psalmist: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."¹³

Christian liberty does not allow or excuse acts of lawlessness, as though they were no more sin. This is not to set up the claim that the Christian does not any more trespass against the law of righteousness. He daily commits much sin. Yet he does not sin in the name of his liberty and in concert therewith, but against it. When he sins, he sins against his own best right and privilege. He has received the liberty which is his in order that he might assert and use it in the service of God and of righteousness and not as "a cloke of wickedness,"¹⁴ or "for an occasion to the flesh."¹⁵ If he thus misuses his liberty he employs it in a service in which there can be no real freedom like that which laves the depths of his soul when he serves God in truth and righteousness: on the contrary he finds the service of sin, whatever momentary satisfaction it may yield, leaving behind a sense of oppression and an anguish of soul that besuit only a lapse into bondage. He has slept on watch, he has dreamed illusory dreams and walked in his sleep, he has thought his foot securely planted and it slipped, he has fallen a prey to evil. He has not asserted his liberty in accordance with its own law, and in the evil hour it has slipped from his conscious grasp. He has not sown unto freedom but unto bondage, and he reaps as he has sown, a

¹³ Psalm 1: 1, 2.

¹⁴ I Peter 2: 16.

¹⁵ Gal. 5: 13.

harvest of bondage, the bread of disappointment and tears.

It is necessary that the Christian exercise his liberty against all impulses to lawlessness, all antinomian extravagancies, as well as against a legalistic rigorism. These two are equally opposed to it, and it to them; and in its efforts to maintain itself and live in accordance with the law of its own being it may seem now to lean to an easy-going philosophy of life with essentially selfish and hedonistic aims and now to a stern ascetic view which abhors evil but takes all heart out of life and out of the universe. It seems always to be acting against itself, or rather vacillating between two ever resounding voices, the one moving by its appeal, the other by its strict imperative. The only thing that can hold this liberty to a majestic, steady and felicitous course is that "the royal law"¹⁶ of its own being be operative within; that is, that "Thou love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and that "Thou love thy neighbour as thyself."¹⁷

Love, as we have seen,¹⁸ is the very heart and soul of Christian liberty in its active relations to both God and man. Where love reigns in the heart and directs the life, obedience and service to God are not irksome but are rather the free and joyous expression of the soul. Likewise where love actuates one it causes him freely and with purest delight to refrain from doing any ill to his neighbour.¹⁹ He who walks in holy love

¹⁶ Jas. 2: 8.

¹⁷ Matt. 22: 37-39.

¹⁸ Pages 39-41.

¹⁹ Rom. 13: 10.

is a free man, living and acting as he does not by constraint from without, not as one cowed by fear, nor as one swayed by covetousness and sensual passion, but as one who directs his own way calmly, peacefully and with exultation.

Thus, in order to obtain a complete conception of Christian liberty it is necessary to give due consideration to two questions about it: *from what?* and *for what?* It is freedom *from* bondage under the law, from sin and condemnation, from the dominion of selfish impulse and desire; and *for* loving spontaneous obedience, submission, service, justice, mercy, truth and purity.

It is further necessary to bear in mind, and it requires repeating, that Christian liberty does not come to full realization in Christian experience here in this life. Often it is a weakly specimen which never thrives or puts on beauty and strength. On the human side, in the best, it exhibits many defects, many failures and infirmities, many spurious forms and manifestations, many inconsistencies and shameful contradictions; but on the divine side it is "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." In this liberty, so faulty in us that we hardly dare claim it, yet so perfect and abundantly full in its Author, the Christian man is, as Luther said, "a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" and "a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In this liberty, as Luther again said, we have "the whole of Christian living"; in other words, in it we have salvation and eternal life in its initial stage of development.

IV

HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IS OBTAINED

HOW this liberty is obtained has been implied here and there in the preceding pages. We must now give fuller consideration to the question, as the importance of it requires.

To show how the liberty of which we have been speaking is obtained for men is to show at the same time how salvation and eternal life are obtained. This liberty is deliverance from sin and self-blinding estrangement from God who is the soul's eternal Good; it is the soul's welcome back to the bosom of the Father without whom it is forever orphaned, and its reinstatement into the blessedness of sonship. But this is only to speak of eternal life and salvation in terms that are somewhat descriptive and picturesque, conveying to the mind the same thing under different imagery. With this constantly in mind and conceiving of the salvation proclaimed through the Gospel as being that liberty which rings everywhere in the speech and writings of the apostles, let us seek to find the answer to our question, How is this liberty obtained?

It becomes the possession of Christians in a way unlike to that in which men obtain the liberty variously described as political, civil, individual and religious. It is different from any or all of these.

Religious liberty in America means freedom in the

exercise of one's own religion, without interference by the government, whether he be Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jew or a member of any other religious group. It is the right not only of individuals but also of congregations and larger organizations, and is guaranteed by the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The people of the states and of the nation have established this liberty for themselves by their own act, just as they have freedom of speech, of the press, and of peaceable assembly; and they have done it without bloodshed. In most other lands religious liberty, where it exists, has been won by bitter struggle and by long and bloody wars; for example the Thirty-Years War in Germany ending in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia.

Four million slaves received their liberty when President Lincoln, in his Emancipation Proclamation issued on January 1, 1863, declared them "then, thenceforward and forever free." We know the price that was paid for their freedom. Their children are heirs of their liberty; furthermore, by the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution it was enacted that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

Our liberty as a people, political liberty, or the right of determining the form of government under which we live and of effectually conducting the same, was won by the blood and sacrifice of our ancestors of the Revolution. It came in a natural though costly way.

Civil liberty, by which we mean the privileges and immunities of citizenship, has been established and defined also by constitutional and legislative enactments, as was the case with religious liberty. As a people we are the authors of our own liberties.

Individual including personal liberty is the right to come and go, to choose a trade or profession though not necessarily to practise it without restriction, to select our wearing apparel, also our associates and companions, to eat the kind of food we like, and to do all such things as do not fall ordinarily within the province of government. This is a natural right which may be freely exercised so long as we do not invade the rights of others.

Roman citizenship involved certain rights and privileges, among which was that of liberty as opposed to slavery, also exemption from bonds and scourging without trial and conviction. Men held it by different claims. This was illustrated by the interesting case of St. Paul and a certain Roman official. The latter finding to his surprise that this Jew was a Roman citizen said to him: "With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born."¹

Now Christian liberty, as we have endeavoured to define it according to the New Testament Scriptures, is different from any and all of these varieties² especially in that man is altogether the recipient of it and is in no manner or degree the responsible originator and author

¹ Acts 22: 28.

² Yet it values all of them, and opposes every bondage. Acts 26: 29.

of it. It does not belong among what we may regard as natural liberties. A man is not born to it from his mother's womb. Neither does he obtain it by his own prowess or by the payment of any price which is within the power of man to lay down. There is no power inherent in man or in nature that can produce it. It is still an exotic in this world.

This liberty is the liberty of the grace of God. This means that it is free; it costs man, the recipient and beneficiary of it, nothing. St. Paul calls it "the free gift" and "the gift by grace;"³ and argues that if it is by grace, "then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."⁴

In so far, then, as this liberty consists in a loosing or setting free from the law, from sin and condemnation, it is exclusively the work of God, a gift bestowed upon man "without any merit or worthiness" on his part. It is an emancipation and in this respect bears a similitude to the voluntary manumission of a slave by his owner; the difference being that in the one case the emancipation or release affects especially the bodily activities of the man, whereas in the other it goes to the depths of the spirit and sets the man free in the very springs of his life, imparting to him at the same time the gift of the Holy Spirit, thus supplying the necessary guidance and assistance for the new life.

If we think of this liberty as it asserts and proves itself in the life, man has his own part therein; but even the desire and ability to exercise his liberty in Christian living he owes to the grace of God. That

³ Rom. 5: 15.

⁴ Rom. 11: 6.

which Christ said to Pilate concerning His kingdom is true also of this liberty; it is not of this world. It is a heavenly, sure and indestructible liberty because it has its ground in the will of God. Man can forfeit and lose it only by his own disregard of it and faithlessness to it as a trust committed to him.

This liberty is bestowed upon men in Christ Jesus. It can never be separated in one's thought from Him, and every one who claims it must base his claim upon what Christ has done. Without any attempt to explain the mystery of the atonement, suffice it to say that what Christ did He did for the redemption of mankind; and what God does for men He does in Christ and on account of Christ's redeeming work. For this Christ came, and for this He lived, loved, served, suffered and died, that men might have this liberty. He Himself said, "I came not to judge the world but to save the world."⁵ Again He said "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,"⁶ "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,"⁷ testifies St. Paul. God was in Christ loving the world.⁸ God was in Christ redeeming the world,⁹ procuring and proclaiming liberty to the captives, making men free, saving and giving eternal life and all that belongs to it. It is all one whether we say that God bestows this liberty or that it is Christ who makes men free.

In His work as Liberator Christ fulfilled all righteousness. He came, as He Himself said, not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them to the ut-

⁵ John 12: 47.

⁶ Luke 19: 10.

⁷ II Cor. 5: 19.

⁸ John 3: 16.

⁹ Eph. 1: 7.

most.¹⁰ In Him is the righteousness to which men were called, but without effect, by Moses and the prophets, a righteousness provided for us by God aside from the law, because "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight."¹¹ The effect of the law is only to produce in us the knowledge of sin; it makes us deeply conscious of the fact that we are sinners but cannot bring us unto righteousness or righteousness to us. But since the law could not do this, on account of the weakness of the flesh,¹² God in His love and grace does it in another way. For "now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ."¹³ Thus Christ "fulfils for us the whole will and law of God." If the law holds us to righteousness and terrifies us and takes all hope away by the sternness of its speech, we have this for an answer: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."¹⁴ He has blotted out "the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross."¹⁵

If the prophets ancient or modern are wont to batter our ears with warnings against dependence upon sacrifice and with the oft-repeated summons to the righteousness of the law, until we feel that in us "there dwelleth no good thing,"¹⁶ we rejoice to find an answer

¹⁰ Matt. 5: 17, 18.

¹¹ Rom. 3: 20-22 R. V.

¹² Rom. 8: 3.

¹³ Rom. 3: 20-22 R. V.

¹⁴ Rom. 10: 4.

¹⁵ Col. 2: 14 R. V.

¹⁶ Rom. 7: 18.

from one of their own number which so completely embodies the teaching of the New Testament about Christ that, except for the tense, the words might easily be mistaken for those of St. Paul: "and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"¹⁷ Thus Christ delivers us from bondage to the law, and for this freedom we can pour out our hearts in the words of His apostle: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹⁸

Christ as our High Priest fulfilled also for us and for all men the office and work of priesthood. "Now, once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹⁹ This frees us from all further need of sacrifice. "He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"²⁰ and even He had no additional offering to make forever; all that was left was that He wait "till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."²¹ Thus wrote the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and he adduced the following words from the thirteenth chapter of Jeremiah to show that the Holy Spirit through the prophet was bearing witness with him to the same effect: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws on their heart, And upon their mind also will I write them; then saith he, And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."²² Very aptly from these words the writer of

¹⁷ Jer. 23: 6.¹⁸ Rom. 7: 25.¹⁹ Heb. 9: 26.²⁰ Heb. 10: 12.²¹ Heb. 10: 13, 14 R. V.²² Heb. 10: 16, 17.

Hebrews draws his conclusion in harmony with what he had said before: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."²³ Nothing more could be needed.

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.*

Here we see two of the most precious elements of the liberty which we have as Christians, namely freedom from sin and from the need of any earthly priesthood; and this liberty we owe to Christ our great High Priest, who is also "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."²⁴

Having "made purification of sins," seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high"²⁵ and reigning in glory, the ascended Lord wields "all power in heaven and on earth."²⁶ And now as Lord of lords and King of kings²⁷ He, through His Holy Spirit, bestows, seals and preserves this precious liberty unto all believers.

Thus what all the provision of the Mosaic dispensation with its commandments and statutes, its sacrifices and offerings, its priesthood and elaborate ceremonial could not effect, Christ does as the Mediator

²³ Heb. 10: 18.

²⁶ Matt. 28: 18.

²⁴ John 1: 29.

²⁵ Heb. 1: 3.

²⁷ Rev. 17: 14.

of the new testament in His own blood. What the armies and navies of all the world could not do Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, did for us, when He ascended up on high and led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.²⁸

For our part we obtain this liberty through faith; that is, by faith we come to know, experience, enjoy and practise it. While it is more than that which St. Paul means by *justification* it becomes ours in the same way; so that when he shows how men are justified before God he shows also how they are made partakers of the liberty of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and all that he says of the one is equally applicable to the other. For example, when he says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"²⁹ it is just as true that a man obtains his liberty by faith apart from any compliance with the law on his part.

It is when one comes to the assertion and proof of the liberty which he has received by faith that the law serves him. Then he realizes that the law which was over him and accused him is a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path.³⁰ Then he finds it a help to him in the practice of his liberty; he understands and speaks the language of the Psalmist: "I shall walk at liberty; for I have sought thy precepts."³¹

This liberty is the compendium of all that Christ came into the world to do for men and to effect in them. It is wonderfully rich in the blessings it be-

²⁸ Eph. 4: 8.

²⁹ Rom. 3: 28.

³⁰ Psalm 119: 105.

³¹ Psalm 119: 45 R. V.

stows. It releases the soul from every bondage that oppresses it, takes away every guilt-born fear, rests it from its every care, and gives it that peace which passeth all understanding, enlivens it with joy and gladness, endows it with new affections, and gives it new aims and loyalties; and into this liberty the soul is brought through faith in Christ and His redemption. There is a most beautiful summary of it all in these words known to the millions who have learned Luther's Small Catechism.

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be His, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness: even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity."

V

HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BEHAVES

OUR object in this and in the following chapter will be to take a close view of Christian liberty and observe how it acts; so that we may see what are its normal effects upon personality and life. For liberty, just as life itself, has its char-

acteristic modes of manifestation, which are known to those who have and use it.

It acts alike in the individual Christian and in the group, though it is slower producing its effects in the many than in the one or the few, because all do not possess it in the same measure or react to it with equal promptness. It acts in the same way, however, in all who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them regardless of rank or relative position, or any other distinction which serves to separate men into classes. There may be differences of calling and varieties of gifts; one may serve in one capacity and one in another; one may labour more abundantly than another, and wield greater power for good in the kingdom; but this liberty behaves alike in all.

Every one who is a Christian has been called unto this liberty and to the use of it in his station; not less the minister, the priest, the bishop, or whatever other official there may be, than the humblest layman; magistrates and rulers as well as subjects or citizens; employers as well as the employed; teachers as well as pupils; every one who in any capacity is over as well as those who are under; and those who are partners or equals in any relationship whatsoever. In all relations Christians are called to maintain, assert and use the liberty which is theirs in accordance with its own nature and for the ends which it is appointed to serve. They are called to live the life of the Lord's freemen, though they are at the same time Christ's servants,¹ and the servants of all men. To do this is hardest,

¹ I Cor. 7: 22.

perhaps, for those who are clothed with authority. Authority can enslave the one who possesses it as well as the one over whom it is exercised.

In attempting to describe the behaviour of this liberty we must think always of its proper effects in the life of the Christian. As the true Christian behaves himself toward God and man and life in general he is using and making proof of his liberty in Christ Jesus. To disclose his inner life, and to show the principles which motivate and control his actions, this is to make manifest the nature of Christian liberty and its proper way of asserting itself.

It behaves *freely*. As known to the true Christian in consciousness his liberty in Christ is a distinct sense of full and unassailable freedom.

First of all, it is the assurance which he has of his complete deliverance from sin, so that sin's power is broken. It cannot condemn him; it is met with faith's defiance, trusting in and relying upon Him who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."² It uses this "shield of faith"³ also in its fight against all the assaults of evil, and by it alone is one able to overcome.

The freedom which is given to the Christian makes itself known in his consciousness as a deliverance from false and unworthy notions of God. To the soul that has received this boon God is not any more a God who pursues His erring children with wrath and vengeance; but He is a gracious God and Father, to whom even the poor sinner may "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."⁴

² Heb. 9: 26.

³ Eph. 6: 16.

⁴ Heb. 10: 22.

This freedom also asserts itself in the heart of the true Christian as a life in the grace of the Gospel as over against the life which was in bondage under the law. It enables the Christian to see the law through different eyes, so that he does not hate it or wish to put it away from his thoughts, but earnestly desires as a child of God to render due obedience to the Father's gracious and good will as expressed in the law. He is not in bondage under the law, nor in rebellion against the law, but walks freely in the law. He can heartily say with the Psalmist: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."⁵

The liberty which the Christian has through Christ Jesus enables him also to evaluate all human rites, traditions and opinions and to determine his proper bearing toward them. They cannot be imposed upon him as ordinances and commandments of God. As such he is free from them and rightly refuses to be made subject to them. If they serve the purpose of promoting peace and good order and are profitable unto edification, he will in love exercise his liberty in a complai-

⁵ Psalm 19: 7-11.

sant attitude of conformity. Christian liberty behaves orderly, purposively and constructively, and is incompatible with the spirit of individualism, fanaticism and iconoclasm. Where these are found they are evidence of a mind that is obsessed and hence not free. Necessary to this liberty is the power of self-control, so that one lose not his liberty in license or in anarchism.

The Christian who possesses knowledge and discernment can, in the exercise of his liberty, behave quite freely without sin in regard to some things about which many people have scruples. Thus St. Paul, so far as he himself was concerned, could eat all things, knowing that nothing is unclean of itself; or he could confine himself to herbs.⁶ He could drink wine, and could with good conscience say to Timothy: "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."⁷ He could have eaten things that had been offered unto idols, whereas there were many in his day who could not do so without sin, because they did not fully comprehend the meaning of the truth that "no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one." They did not clearly grasp the significance of the fact that to the Christian "there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him."⁸ If they had rightly understood this their consciences would not have been troubled about the question whether that which was set before them had been offered in sacrifice to idols or not; for as the

⁶ Rom. 14: 1-3, 14. ⁷ I Tim. 5: 23 R. V. ⁸ I Cor. 8: 1-18.

idol was nothing the food would have been the same to them as though it had not been offered at all; and they could have eaten freely and thanked God for it, just as Paul could and doubtless did many times during his extensive travels.⁹ So it was about days. Paul in the exercise of his Christian liberty was not bound in conscience to observe one day as better than any other. He could esteem all days alike, and would not suffer that any one should judge him in this or in any other of the matters which have been mentioned.¹⁰

Christian liberty is not under the sway of evil inhibitions or psychoses; such as fear, prejudice, pride, ambition, jealousy and envy. He who is held back by these when he ought to act, or by them is instigated to evil, is in bondage of the worst sort; it is a bondage which is self-imposed, nursed and cherished, and it has the effect of an opiate in producing inactivity; and of a stimulant in inciting to wrong courses. Christian liberty shakes off all such shackles and moves freely in relation to them; doing the thing that is right and leaving results with God, postponing judgment until all the facts in a situation are known and then acting with charity, turning the eyes away from self and seeking to give all due consideration to the opinions and wishes of others, restraining unkindly sentiments toward them and rejoicing in their prosperity and happiness, not lording it over others but in all things using brotherly love.

This liberty behaves *joyously*. This it can do because it is a precious possession and because it has a

⁹ I Cor. 10: 25-30.

¹⁰ Rom. 14: 5, 6 and Col. 2: 16.

mighty Lord and King for its Author and Surety. On account of the atoning work of Christ it has a God who is gracious. It breathes the fresh, pure air of life from above, the new life of sonship to God and of love to Him and to all that He has made. It is exempt from the foolish fears and superstitions which afflict those who are in bondage still to the elements of the world. It responds inwardly with joy and thanksgiving to the assurance it has of sonship and of all that this carries with it. It reasons that if we are children, then are we also heirs, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,"¹¹ whom the Father has appointed heir of all things.¹² It lives in the knowledge that "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."¹³ It is its right to rejoice alway and in all things.

A morose, gloomy, sullen temper is a gross misrepresentation of the spirit of Christian liberty. Jesus made this very plain when some of His critics came to Him and carpingly said: "The disciples of John fast often, and make supplications; likewise also the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink. And Jesus said unto them, Can ye make the sons of the bride chamber" (meaning the companions of the bridegroom) "fast, while the bridegroom is with them?"¹⁴ Those who have Christ and the freedom which He gives from whatsoever beclouds or oppresses the soul,

¹¹ Rom. 8: 17.¹² Heb. 1: 2.¹³ I Cor. 3: 21-23.¹⁴ Luke 5: 33, 34.

lays it under bondage, or circumscribes its just powers, have not only the right to be joyous and to use their liberty as a gift from Him; they owe it to Him to show how beautiful, rich and winsome is the life to which He calls men here on earth. The Christian life has been made to look austere and repellent through the failure of Christians to appreciate their birthright and to set before the world the pattern of that true freedom which Christ proclaimed by word and deed, and which St. Paul was the first clearly to understand and interpret fully to men.

It is customary for writers and speakers to refer to this joyless and repellent Christianity under the name of Puritanism. And it must be said that there is much justification for their so doing. The Puritans in England and America have been, among Protestants, the chief exponents of it. Their doctrine of divine election and absolute predestination, coupled with the sure prospect of heaven for the elect and of eternal torment as the unescapable doom of those who have been passed by, could not possibly produce in men a spirit of confiding love toward God, but must on the other hand leave Him as cold and arbitrary as Fate. And since no one could know whether he belonged to the number of the elect or not, it could make no difference what kind of life he lived; the end would in any case be the same—that which had been decreed from eternity. If one could persuade himself that he was among the elect, why should he worry about his relations to God and his eternal destiny? His chief concern would then be to avoid getting into trouble with his fellowmen and

into the toils of the law. It can easily be seen that such a doctrine of God could not produce a joyous piety and might readily land its adherents in a religion of externalism and legalism, or even in a hypocritical out-of-door religion, like that of the Pharisees, which might be seen of men and stamp them as praiseworthy or at least respectable, if it could do no more. And the more numerous the rules and regulations governing the externals of religion and daily life, and the more rigidly they were observed, the more saintly would the life appear, even though it were a very unattractive and undesirable sort of saintliness. As for those who could not assure themselves that they were of the elect, the way to atheism and self-indulgence was direct and enticing. But, thanks to the fact that systems rarely work out precisely as would be antecedently expected, not all who were of Puritan stock were either saintly or wicked as the logic would seem to require.

But the conception of life which we somewhat vaguely name Puritanism did not begin with the Puritans. It was a heritage derived by them directly from John Calvin, the chief representative and relentless enforcer of the idea of a life regulated in all of its details by divine law. Calvin aimed at a theocratic control of public morals in Geneva through a consistory of six ministers and twelve lay elders whose sentences against offenders were forthwith put into execution by the civil government. In a recent biography of Calvin,¹⁵ the author, who apologizes even for the part that the Re-

¹⁵ John Calvin, "His Life Letters and Work," by Hugh Y. Rayburn, 1914.

former took in the burning of Servetus by saying that "Servetus died at the hands of those who persecuted in unconscious contradiction of their fundamental principles," nevertheless says of Calvin, at the close of a chapter on "Personal Characteristics," that "He was too intense to be generally amiable, and he was oftener feared than loved." This may have been due in part to the dyspepsia and general ill health from which Calvin suffered; but who can resist the conviction that the kind of man he was receives its truer explanation in his theological views, especially in his legalistic approach to the solution of the problem of maintaining purity of faith and morals? In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* there is a chapter on Christian Liberty¹⁶ in which many things are admirably said; but in emphasizing as he did the sovereignty of God and conceiving of the Scriptures as the law of the Sovereign for human society, which at all costs must be enforced, he seems to have forgotten the principle of Christian liberty, of which charity is an essential, in dealing with those citizens who came under his displeasure. Too often, likewise, among his followers, the same theocratic ideas and the doctrine of predestination have completely overshadowed Calvin's more evangelical teachings on justification by faith and Christian liberty, thus leading to an austere and somber type of religion. Here also it is a joy to record that the peculiar principles of Calvin, though not altogether laid, are by no means as influential as they were, and have few friends to fight for them as he did.

¹⁶ "Institutes," Book III, Chap. XIX.

From the biography above referred to are quoted the following significant sentences: "On the spot where Servetus was executed there now stands a monument raised by some of those who have a more reverent regard for the convictions of their fellowmen than was cherished by their theological ancestor. On one side it bears this inscription:

'The 27th October, 1553, died at the stake at Champel, Michael Servetus of Villeneuve, in Aragon, born 29th September 1511.'

And on the other side:

'The respectful and grateful sons of Calvin, our great Reformer, condemning an error which was that of his time, and firmly attaching themselves to liberty of conscience according to the true principles of the Reformation and the Gospel, have raised this expiatory monument. 27th October, 1903.'

If it had not been forgotten that Christian liberty does not exist in the absence of Christian love no such "expiatory monument" had been necessary; and Christianity would not have gone about the world for so long a time in joyless spirit and in mourning garb.

Christian liberty behaves *charitably*; that is, in the same way that love behaves. In its life toward God it moves and acts in love, which utters itself in prayer and communion with God, in praise and thanksgiving, and in a filial obedience. This freedom also behaves as love does in relation to one's neighbour, and never in an uncharitable way; for he who acts uncharitably is

driven by a selfish instinct, and that an evil one, and shows that he has not escaped from the bondage to self.

It is an essential characteristic of liberty that it does, in the final analysis, as it chooses or wishes to do in any given situation. It may choose the way of self-denial, of self-sacrifice, or even of death, as Christian liberty often has done and will; and it glories in its choice, and is happy in doing that which under the circumstances it delights to do. There is something dearer than selfish gratification, something greater and more noble than triumphing over one's enemies, something that is rated above ease and life itself, and liberty chooses always that which it esteems the higher good. Otherwise it is not liberty.

Now all this is nothing else but to say that Christian liberty acts in precisely the same way that love does. Love is an outward reaching virtue. There is doubtless some element of truth in the familiar saying that "Charity begins at home." Yet when it stays at home we do not call it charity. We have another name for that kind of love, and that name is selfishness. It is so narrowed and limited that it lacks the essential element of love, namely freedom. This self-seeking spirit is in bondage to the ego, and waits upon it as a servant always. Love quite to the contrary, is not self-centered; nor is it self-serving. It reaches out; and in its outgoings there can be but one restraining power; and that is conscience, one's own or another's. But if love be thus restrained for conscience sake it is done freely, because one so wills. In the same way does liberty be-

have; and only as it acts charitably, that is, with the same spontaneity, self-restraint and consideration of others which characterize the outgoings of love, can it be true liberty. If one acts selfishly he is not free, for in that case he is a slave and self is the driver.

Love's way of acting is beautifully portrayed in that wonderful thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. And if we think of liberty in action, it would be quite legitimate to substitute the word "liberty" for the word "love" where the action of love is described in that chapter. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own."¹⁷ Love takes little thought of self. It melts in its fervent glow all the bonds of selfishness and sets one free from them; and without love there is no freedom from the sway of selfish impulses and inhibitions. Where there is such liberty it is love that produces it, animates it, sustains it, and determines its behaviour. We might, therefore, with all truth, say of liberty the same things which St. Paul says of love. Christian liberty behaves in the same way that Christian charity or love does, because when it acts in its true character and according to its own nature love is the moving directing power. If selfish impulses or motives of any kind control the action, there is no real liberty. The action is free only when love is the motive power and the presence that shows the way.

Here belongs the exposition of all the gentler and

¹⁷ I Cor. 15: 4, 5 R. V.

more amiable traits of Christian character: such as, fellowship, brotherliness, fraternity; obligingness, courtesy, civility; generosity; truthfulness, sincerity; confidence, trust; patience, forbearance, tolerance; humility. The relation of these to the principle of Christian liberty will be described with some illustration in the following chapter.

VI

HOW CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BEHAVES

(*Continued*)

THE antonym for each of the words listed in the closing paragraph of the preceding chapter will be found to be expressive of some form of selfishness. Prefix "un-," "in-," "im-," or "dis-" to these words or their adjectives, where allowable, and see the result. In all cases the resultants will be words which are in common use, all of which have in them the suggestion of selfishness, and several of them the added thought of insolence, bitterness, hatred, suspicion or the like. In the highest and truest sense, no one can act freely or joyously whose action toward his fellowman, and especially his fellow Christian, has to be described by the use of these ugly prefixes to very beautiful words.

Christian liberty behaves *fraternally* toward brethren in Christ Jesus even though they may have many

weaknesses and serious faults. Whatever these may be, it must acknowledge that "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."¹ Christ acknowledges every one who believes on His name as a son of God,² and God receives³ him as such; and he remains a child of God and enjoys the fellowship of the Holy Spirit so long as he continues steadfast in the faith. Who then are we that we should act unfraternally toward them that are of the household of faith? What right have we to set up any further requirement for fellowship than that they honestly confess faith in Christ as their only Lord and Saviour and that their "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ"?⁴ How shall we sit in judgment upon those who have the Spirit, and withdraw ourselves from them, because in all sincerity they discard our judgment in some points, especially if our judgment seems to incline to judging rather than to showing mercy? How shall we treat those who are born unto freedom through faith in Christ Jesus, just as we are, as though they were not partakers with us of the same liberty? If we deny to them the liberty which we ourselves hold by the same right and by no other, we thereby tear in pieces the charter of our own liberty and leave ourselves much in the same position as those who will not forgive; for if we will not grant to them the liberty of sonship and recognize them as brethren, how can we expect God to acknowledge us as His children? And it is no answer, when we exclude others from our fellowship, to say that

¹ Gal. 3: 26.² John 1: 12.³ Rom. 14: 3.⁴ Phil. 1: 27 R. V.

we do not deny to them their liberty in Christ Jesus; for if we withhold our fellowship from them we exclude them, in so far as it is in our power to do so, from fellowship with Christ and from the liberty which He gives. But in fact by so doing we exclude ourselves from that liberty and not the others, and are "entangled again in a yoke of bondage."⁵ We deliberately assume the burden of justifying ourselves before God for our unbrotherly treatment of those whom He hears when they pray, "Our Father." Christian liberty, which in action is close akin to love, is fraternal in its treatment of those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and is glad to share everything with them.

Christian liberty behaves *socially*; and the range of its sight and consciousness is very broad. It takes into consideration the well-being of society in general, and is interested in every aspect of the social life. It seeks the betterment of the world in every way, and is ready to deny self, to sacrifice and to serve in order to be helpful in individual instances and on the larger scale. It has a social consciousness also when it comes to deciding its attitude toward the particular group within which it functions. It recognizes, for example, that the Church or Communion to which it belongs is not the creation of any individual, and that it has not been built up according to any individualistic plan. It was not meant to give expression to the opinions, tastes and purposes of one or a few. It is a communion, a fellowship, large or small, and it plans and works and

⁵ Gal. 5: 1 R. V.

worships as a fellowship; and the liberty of the individual Christian does not egoistically choose its own way, but in love and self-forgetfulness looks out for that which pleases, benefits and edifies the whole. Thus it is ever concerned for the peace, unity, good order and efficiency of the fellowship in its development and in the accomplishment of its entire work. And this liberty is not bound to or circumscribed by nationalities, languages, territories, points of the compass, and the like classifications. It has a vision, and takes a large view of things, and with eagerness throws itself into the program or life-work of the whole with which it is identified. It has a love and regard which is considerate of the whole, and that directs its keenest criticism upon whatsoever is purely individualistic.

Christian liberty behaves *obligingly* toward all men. It is its nature to do so, because it is instinct with love. In his funeral oration over the Prince of Conde, Bossuet said, "When a favour was asked of him it was he that appeared obliged." How much of this was mere panegyric and how much truth we need not inquire. Sure it is, that this may be said of any Christian who uses his liberty as the servant of God and of his fellowmen. He is ever ready to go the second mile.

This liberty behaves itself *truthfully*. People who go by the name of Christian can misrepresent in the interest of self or of party, or for the purpose of damaging or hindering some other person or party; but they cannot do so in the name of Christian liberty. Christian principle will not permit one to further his own interests or those of his group, nor to injure those

of another, by falsehood. In the one case it is selfishness that sways one and not truth; and his master's name is spelled with a capital I. In the other instance instead of love it is self, inspired by envy, malice or some other malignant spirit, that impels him. In either case he must know that he is despising and trampling upon his Christian liberty. In the same way this liberty knows no artifice or secret plotting to the disadvantage of another. It can have no pleasure in such things, but must feel the fret of its own bonds. Like love, liberty "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Christian liberty bears itself *confidingly*. As it is truthful itself, it puts trust or confidence in others. It is so disposed and desires to trust men, especially those who profess to be men of faith and whom by acquaintanceship it has found trustworthy. It is not predisposed to suspicion, but to confidence. It may be imposed upon and disappointed time and time again; yet it does not conclude that "all men are liars." It "believeth all things." It is never foolish unless it be for Christ's sake.⁶ It knows its danger; but it would rather trust and be deceived a thousand times than not to trust at all. This explains why good Christian people who are charitably inclined suffer so often at the hands of impostors and false friends. Nevertheless he who puts no confidence in his fellowman is not to be trusted himself. He is full of suspicion and fear. He is without love, which "suffereth long, and is kind;" and is under the domination of those psychoses which

⁶ I Cor. 4: 10.

cause him to shun his fellowman or even to arm himself against him. Christian liberty, like love, "thinketh no evil," meditateth no mischief, and trusts others to be of the same mind.

This liberty behaves *tolerantly*. It does not belong to its nature to be inquisitorial, and the thought of persecution is abhorrent to it. It gladly accords to others the freedom which it claims for itself and which it holds dear beyond all price. It lives in the Golden Rule as in its element. To act intolerantly is to contradict its own nature, and to chafe under the yoke of bigotry and hate.

Much more might be written by way of characterizing the action of Christian liberty. Indeed, in order to do full justice to the subject one would have to describe the Christian life in all of its relations. All of the gentler and more engaging qualities of this liberty, both those which have been mentioned and the many others that might be added, may be briefly comprehended in this statement, that Christian liberty behaves *unselfishly* in its relations toward men. Then only, when it acts unselfishly, is it free from the bonds which fit the closest, bind the tightest, and are hardest to break. In this case, the prefix "un-" serves a double purpose; it takes away from the word to which it is prefixed all that is mean and servile in spirit, and gives a word so changed in meaning that, in common use, it suggests the nobility and freedom of actions that have regard for the interests of others. And this is a beautiful Christian grace. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of

others.”⁷ The following familiar passages will show how the fragrance of an unselfish love exhales from every nosegay of graces and virtues assembled by the hands of apostles. “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”⁸ “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”⁹ “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.”¹⁰ It is just as St. James says: “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.”¹¹ Indeed, they do well who love well. And we may add that he who seeks to fulfil the royal law of love is working out in his own life “the perfect law of liberty.”¹²

Christian liberty has also what might be termed its masculine traits, such as exhibit a somewhat more aggressive quality. For example, in a sense it behaves *jealously*. It has its rights too; and these rights it

⁷ Phil. 2: 4.

¹⁰ II Peter 1: 5-7.

⁸ Rom. 13: 8-10.

¹¹ James 2: 8.

⁹ Gal. 5: 22, 23.

¹² James 1: 25.

cherishes and defends against every encroachment. While it acts with a certain measure of compliance and yieldingness, it cannot suffer anything that is contrary to its very nature, or that would replace freedom with a yoke of bondage. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy." It was because he feared lest their "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ,"¹³ and that thus their liberty in the Gospel should be taken away from them by their false Judaizing teachers. It was this jealousy for the liberty of Christ's people that moved him to write his epistle to the Galatians and to say to them, "For freedom did Christ set us free: Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."¹⁴ It was for the same reason that Titus, Greek though he was, was not required to be circumcised. It was "because of false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." But their plans were utterly defeated, as the apostle shows when he says, "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour."¹⁵ It was as much jealousy for the liberty of His people as it was indignation at hypocrisy that drew from Jesus this withering charge against the Pharisees: "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."¹⁶

¹³ II Cor. 11: 2, 3 R. V. ¹⁴ Gal. 5: 1 R. V. ¹⁵ Gal. 2: 4, 5.

¹⁶ Matt. 23: 4.

Because it is jealous of its life and its rights Christian liberty cannot quietly and without due vigilance submit to any form of legalism or traditionalism; neither can it adopt methods and measures that are legalistic in spirit as means to self-preservation. If it should resort to such principles and measures it would by so doing acknowledge its own inherent weakness and insufficiency, and would turn to that which is foreign to its nature and which inevitably leads toward a state of bondage. To have recourse to extra-confessional "rules" to secure right "practice," is to imitate the governments of this world in that the final resort for the achievement of the desired ends must be something close akin to forcing men, forcing them into compliance with the "rules" or forcing them out of the ranks. Such a policy creates a situation in which men have little or no freedom. They *must* accept the institutions, orders, rules and regulations and conform to them, or else suffer the consequences. In such a situation it is impossible to say that men act willingly and freely. The legalistic principle depends for its success not upon the power of the divine Word but upon intimidation and fear. It would not be surprising to any one, who understands human nature but a little, to find a marked tendency among the slaves of such a tyrannical system to hypocrisy and all kinds of chicanery.

In some civilizations and governments legislation is so relied upon to secure right and approved conduct among the citizens that the professed regard for Law on the part of the legalists amounts almost to a nomol-

atry. Enact a law and the law is at once elevated into the realm of the sanctities and must be worshipfully obeyed. If not—whack! When this happens to a country liberty spreads its wings and flies away. Besides, any reflecting person knows that the best that can be said of some laws is that they are a necessary evil.

The same spirit has been alive and busy in the organized Church in every age and country. Human traditions, canon law, and "rules" established by lesser ecclesiastical authorities, none of them sufficiently supported by either the letter or the spirit of the Gospel, have been set up and proclaimed as necessary, and all those who do not fall down and do reverence to them are judged to be heretical, are pronounced un- this or un- that, and would be kept out of the kingdom of heaven were it not that the liberty which Christ gives, and which means life, is not subject to the canons and "rules" which men make. Christian liberty jealously guards itself against all such arrogant assumptions of authority,¹⁷ and gives place to them by way of subjection, no, not for an instant. Thus it resists the claims of sacerdotalism and refuses the chains which it forges to bind the consciences of men. It will not acknowledge the right of any to lay upon it as necessary the observance of days, rites, ceremonies and usages; or to be the keeper of its conscience. It will not listen with complacency to the commandment, "This thou shalt" and "This thou shalt not," of any man or body of men who set themselves up as the

¹⁷ "It shall not be so among you." Matt. 20: 26.

keepers and dispensers of knowledge and wisdom and as the infallible judges of things pertaining to God and His truth. It revolts at inquisitional methods and at everything that savours of espionage. There might be found some excuse for such things in the Middle Ages and in the days of John Calvin; but none now. Emphatically the free Christian protests: "Why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"¹⁸

Christian liberty lives by Faith and works by love, and is not under Law but under Grace. It is Christian liberty that is encountered in the endeavour to bring all denominations of Christians together in one organized Church under Episcopal Orders with the conception that Episcopacy is necessary to the unity of the Church and to the valid administration of the sacraments and of absolution. It is Christian liberty that stands up and asserts its independence when one group of Evangelical Christians, adherents of the earliest Protestant Confession of Faith,¹⁹ says to another group equally sincere in acknowledging the same faith, "Before we can have fellowship with you, you must accept our rule, that there must be absolute agreement in all points of doctrine and in just two matters of practice wherein we find you to be sinners." This is doubly offensive to the spirit of Christian liberty when it is a notorious fact that so far as "practice" is concerned the "rule" is not applied by its advocates to laymen but only to ministers, thus adopting the principle of a double ethical standard and tempting the ministry to a double-faced policy; the policy of allow-

¹⁸ I Cor. 10: 29.

¹⁹ The Augsburg Confession, 1530.

ing their members to join lodges in order to avoid losses, and holding aloof themselves, whether as a matter of principle or in order to keep from offending the "authorities," the higher-ups in the Church, who can say?

In the circumstances the whole thing seems Jesuitical; and the "rule" impresses one as chiefly a talking point, a piece of defense mechanism, a *casus belli*; and the entire controversy about it, pure logomachy. To make it still more offensive and to give it the *reductio ad absurdum*, the word "practice" is by these legalists so narrowed down in common use as to include nothing else besides opposition to lodges and to any sort of fellowship with those followers of Christ who do not follow them. It is an unjustifiable use of the word. In its evangelical sense the word "practice" has reference to the whole conduct of the Christian and not to these particular instances, as though offending in these two points were the only sins calling for the universal application of discipline. It would seem more consistent, more sincere, and more in harmony with the principle of Christian liberty to appeal to every man's conscience, ministers and laymen, in such matters. So far as witnessing to the truth in the present divided state of the churches is concerned, we much prefer a statement like the following: "Until a more complete unity of confession is attained than now exists, the United Lutheran Church in America is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts and

its altars must testify only to that truth.”²⁰ With regard to the extra-ecclesiastical organizations and societies, we think it much better to “lay it upon the consciences of the pastors and of the members of all our congregations to scrutinize with the utmost care the doctrines and principles of all teachers, sects, organizations and societies of every sort which seek their adherence and support, and to refuse such adherence and support in all cases of conflict or possible contradiction between these principles and doctrines and those set forth in Holy Scripture and in the Confessions of the Church. In the application of this principle the Church should always appeal to a conscience which it is her sacred duty to enlighten, patiently and persistently, from the Word of God.”²¹

This is a proper place to say something about the attitude of Christian liberty toward the Bible. It dearly loves the Bible. In the Bible it finds God, and knows Him as the Father. There it reads the story of God’s dealing with the human race for at least several thousands of years, and sees that the moving power in all that He has done has been nothing but “pure, paternal, and divine goodness and mercy.” There it finds Christ the revelation of the Father, in some parts more than in others. Christian liberty ever returns to the Bible, and when it does so it approaches it to renew its fellowship with God in Christ, the God of love and mercy; and it finds what it seeks. It does

²⁰ See Declaration of Principles, C., V., in Minutes of U. L. C. A., 1920, page 97.

²¹ See Declaration of Principles E. III, in Minutes of U. L. C. A., 1920, page 100.

not come to the Bible as to a code of laws or a handbook of rules and of ready information on all matters concerning which men may seek knowledge for intelligent, large, right and fruitful living. It comes there to find God in Christ and to worship Him. If it does not find Him in every place it does not tarry long where His heart is not so clearly disclosed, but passes on to other places where He speaks comfortably to it and helps it on its way. It knows how to distinguish between Scripture and Scripture, between the shell and the content, between the chaff and the wheat, between the letter and the spirit; and some parts, for one reason or another, seem to it comparatively negligible, while others are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."²² Christian liberty does not fall into the sin of Bibliolatry; it worships God in Christ whom it finds in the Book, and it loves and uses the Book reverently, though discriminatingly, because it finds God in it and is found of Him.

The attitude of Christian liberty toward the Confessions or symbols of the Church is one of very high regard; but it would rise in revolt against anything like symbolatry. It prizes the Confessions and with vigour contends for the truth as set forth in them; but it recognizes that they are human productions and that they are neither infallible nor forever incapable of emendation.

Christian liberty behaves not only jealously but also *courageously* in order to defend and maintain itself.

²² Psalm 19: 10.

We may cite here the marvelous boldness of the apostles who, when they were commanded by the Sanhedrin not to speak at all nor to teach in the name of Jesus, replied: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."²³ They did not refrain from speaking in the name of Jesus, but went into the temple and taught; and when they were brought again before the Council and were addressed by the high priest saying, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," they answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men."²⁴ Here may be instanced also "The noble army of Martyrs," from Stephen on down to those who within these our days have in Russia witnessed with their blood their devotion to Christ their Saviour and Liberator. Luther at Worms, lifting his hand toward heaven and saying in the presence of the Emperor, Charles V, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me," is another example of the courage of Christian liberty that can never be forgotten or fail to be mentioned when such instances are cited.

It is necessary at this point to speak a word of caution, especially in reference to the last two points above touching the behaviour of Christian liberty. Where it is said that it behaves jealously, it is by no means to be supposed that a schismatic spirit is the

²³ Acts 4: 19, 20.

²⁴ Acts 5: 12-29.

hall-mark of true Christian liberty. It is just the opposite of it. Such a spirit is without love, love to God and His Church and love toward the brethren. Likewise the courage which is a characteristic of Christian liberty must not be confounded with pure obstinacy or berserker madness.

It remains yet to be said that Christian liberty behaves in this world *imperfectly* in all its representatives, even the best of them. In so far as this liberty is the gift of Christ, consisting in freedom from the law and its condemnation and in justification before God for Christ's sake, it is complete and assured so long as one believes. But in so far as his own enjoyment and use of his liberty is concerned the believer grows into this as a child into the possession and use of his inheritance. And in this world the believer never quite ceases to be a child in this respect. Therefore we say that in action Christian liberty behaves imperfectly. The Christian sins daily, which is to say that the liberty which he has received in Christ is hindered and contradicted by his own actions. Hence he must pray daily for forgiveness of sins. His heart and conscience are tormented by doubts and fears on account of his sins; and owing to the weakness of his faith he does not inwardly know and assert his freedom from all condemnation. He does not pray to the Father and trust in Him as he should for the supply of all his needs; and so he is troubled about many things from which as a child of God he should be carefree. And when it comes to the exercise of his liberty in relation to men, and the Church, and society, it many times

serves him in a very imperfect way. It carries him too far and leads him into the sins and extravagancies of selfishness and individualism; or it resigns its rights and submits in a cowardly way to injustice or imposition of one kind or another and leaves him to "sulk in his tents" and nurse bitterness in his heart toward his neighbour. And so, because Christian liberty behaves thus imperfectly it must ever be humble before God, forgiving those who injure or offend, and must seek daily renewal of its strength by "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁵ Thus, like a beautiful and fragrant flower it grows and expands from day to day, until finally it shall burst into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."²⁶

²⁵ Acts 20: 21.

²⁶ Rom. 8: 21.

II

CHURCH UNITY



VII

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF UNITY

IN recent years no subject has received so widespread and intensive study among Christians of every name as that of Christian unity. There have been several "movements" which grew out of this idea and which sought to give it outward expression. Among these were The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America launched in 1905, the World Conference on Faith and Order initiated by action of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States in 1910, the Interchurch World Movement 1918, and the Interchurch Council on Organic Union for which the initiative was taken by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1918. The last two have dropped out of the picture, but the others are alive and active each in its own way to-day.

All down the ages, even in times of the greatest dissension and conflict of parties in the Church, there has been the yearning for unity among all those who professed the name of Christ.

The most beautiful picture of unity that the whole

history of the Church presents is that described in few words in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul (*καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία*). And not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."¹ Moreover, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers."² But this happy situation did not last long. Even those who composed the first congregation in Jerusalem, many of whom doubtless had seen and heard Jesus and all of whom knew Peter and James and John and the other apostles, were not far enough advanced in the liberty which Christ came to give to be free from the bonds of selfishness and greed, jealousy and suspicion. The beautiful experiment which they made, of having all things in common, had soon to reckon with the false return made by Ananias and his wife Sapphira. And not long thereafter a murmuring on the part of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews (Christians all) about the daily distribution³ of food supplies revealed that there were two parties in the Church, or at least a threatened division, over the business management of the apostles. To take care of this situation and to maintain the peace the apostles had the wisdom to turn this "business" over to a committee of seven men (laymen) chosen by the brethren because of their recognized qualifications for handling this matter, and we hear nothing more of it.

¹ Acts 4: 32.² Acts 2: 42.³ Acts 6: 1-3.

Frequently in the writings of St. Paul there are references to divisions and strife in the churches, and always such conditions are deplored and the people are earnestly exhorted to unity. Sometimes the divisions are about matters of doctrine, sometimes about persons, and again about things pertaining to the realm of practice. In all cases, however, the apostle shows that these things trouble him; and especially would he have the brethren "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them." ⁴

It is unnecessary for our purpose to speak at length of the many contentions which disturbed the peace of the early Churches, or of the schisms which mark the course of history from the beginning until now. It is important, however, to establish in our minds the fact that at no time since the Church entered upon its marvelous career of growth and development has it been without internal dissensions, and that even the most competent historical scholar would have to think carefully for his answer if he were suddenly called upon to name a period of one hundred years in which there were no schisms large or small.

These discords and schisms have been a source of distress to Christian hearts in every instance, and even the parties to them, whether congregational factions or divided communions, have grieved over them, even though they may have felt justified each in its own contention and decision. All parties have desired and

⁴ Rom. 16: 17.

prayed for unity; yet all have kept up the fight, and each party has wished for unity only upon its own terms; and the terms offered by any party have usually involved complete surrender by the opposing party of the main points at issue.

It is impossible to conceive the harm that has been done to the cause of Christianity by the dissensions and strife which have filled the centuries and of which every land, every city and many congregations are painfully aware to-day. And when one has lived for a half century or more in the Church and has read and observed, one may, without a sibilant of cynicism in his soul, raise the question, What is Christian unity? Is it something that is, or may be made, observable, so that one may point his finger at it and say, "Behold there," or is it such that one must seek for it only at the end of the rainbow?

One would hesitate to say without qualification, "Lo, here, or, Lo, there;" for though something like it may be found on a small scale in many local churches, yet even in such instances those most familiar with the situation in any case would doubtless say to the seeker, "You must go further to find a perfect example of Christian unity. Here, sad to say, it is marred by this or that manifestation of a spirit that is unchristian." If one were to extend his search to the separate communions, large or small, the quest could lead him only to despair; for in many cases there are wide and irreconcilable divisions within the communions, and in those instances where there seems to be unity there is often only submission and not real unity. And if one

turns his thought to the Church at large, the external, visible aspect of it is one of division and sub-division almost without end.

Yet, we would by no means take the alternative view, and say that the quest for Christian unity is vain and useless. We would not despairingly give up, as though it were altogether unattainable. As well say, we will not seek world-peace or social content because so far all attempts to secure these blessings have failed and the realization of them seems far away. Besides, it would be a pessimistic soul indeed that could not point to some instance that would justify the use of the Psalmist's words: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."⁵

It is necessary, however, that we definitely understand that Christian unity, like world-peace and social content, in so far as it exists or ever shall exist, is not to be conceived of as an *idée fixe* nor as a *fait accompli*, but as an *ideal* to be striven after always in the midst of an ever changing order. On account of the changing conditions it is an ideal that never stands still and is never realized. The further along we get in the pursuit of it the farther we have to go to find it, because no sooner have old difficulties and disputes been laid than new ones arise as hard to deal with and compose as the former. This fugitive quality of the ideal results also from the fact that the Church is a living, growing thing. It grows not only in numbers and in extent of territory covered, but also in knowledge and understanding and in appreciation of changing values

⁵ Psalm 133: 1.

in the realm of morals; and out of this growth external and internal rise conflicts of opinion in regard to many things, and these in turn disturb the peace and unity of the Church. Only in a relative sense can we employ the term Christian unity as characterizing the Church in any particular age or region of the earth.

Now, we may not be able to define Christian unity in a way acceptable to all, but some things may be said about it that should help to a better understanding of the subject; and some of the conditions of it may be pointed out and the way leading to it be thus made a little plainer. In this brief study the writer shall endeavour to eschew the controversial spirit, yet to state frankly what appears to him to be the teaching of the New Testament concerning Christian unity.

We may very properly begin with that prayer of our Lord, "That they all may be one," found in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John; first, because we are most of all concerned to know the mind of Christ on the subject; and secondly, because this prayer is so confidently appealed to as final by those who identify Christian unity with the organic union of the Church.

For what, then, did our Lord pray on the eve of His crucifixion when His thought dwelt so much upon His leaving the disciples and going to the Father? It is quite possible that we may not be able to say what was and what was not in the mind of Christ in that prayer. One feels that he is upon sacred ground when he undertakes to inquire into the meaning of His words, and the reverence one feels causes him to hesi-

tate to use the words of that prayer to support any doctrine of men on a subject about which they have differed so widely and so irreconcilably. But in a study of Christian unity it is impossible to pass those words by. We must seek reverently to know their meaning. So let us ponder them.

The first five verses of the prayer-chapter are wholly taken up with the communion of the Son with the Father. In these verses He speaks of the authority⁶ which He had received from the Father to give to all who had been given to Him eternal life. Life eternal! The thought of that fills His soul, and with it alone He is occupied for the moment, and His solitary definition of it flows softly from His lips: "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." He proceeds in His communion with the Father, saying: "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do:" then He prays: "Now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Now, at verse six, others come into the prayer; and who are they? They are "the men whom thou hast given me out of the world." He continues to speak of them in verses seven and eight, and in such wise that it seems clear that so far He is thinking only of the apostles. And now, beginning with verse nine, His prayer is plainly occupied with thoughts of them alone, as is evident from verse twelve, where He says:

⁶ Following the American Revised Version.

“ While I was with them, . . . I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition: ” as also from verse eighteen, where He says: “ As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world.”

In the eleventh verse He prays: “ Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, *that they may be one, even as we are.*” Certainly at this point He is not praying that the Church may be one in constitution and administration. Indeed, nowhere in the prayer is the Church mentioned at all. So far Christ was evidently thinking of the apostles themselves, and of them only. And it seems clear to one who is not seeking for a recondite or hidden meaning in His words that He is not asking that they may be one in the sense that they shall constitute one body under the primacy of Peter or any other. There does not emerge here even the idea of a *primus inter pares*. He is praying for them as equals, and asks that they may be one as He and the Father are one. There is nothing in the unity for which He asks that could in any way conflict with the assertion and use of Christian liberty on the part of any of them—nothing implying that one was over and another under. It is not a unity of organization or regimentation that Christ has in mind here, but a unity which is vital and profound and that exists without organization, which is, indeed, of such a nature that it cannot be organized but subsists and expresses itself in utmost freedom. In other words it is a spiritual unity, whose every manifestation is fundamentally a spiritual act or quality. It shows itself in

love and in all the tender affections, activities, self-restraints and amenities to which love prompts.

But as our Lord proceeds His prayer takes a wider sweep and He thinks of others, saying: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; even as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me."⁷

Again His thought turns back to His apostles and is directed more especially to them from verse twenty-two onward to the end. This is clear from the following references to those for whom He was praying: "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them;"⁸ "I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am;"⁹ "and these knew that thou didst send me."¹⁰

However that may be, whether from verse twenty-two on He was thinking primarily of His apostles or of His Church in the distant future, there is nothing to indicate that He was praying here, or even in verses twenty and twenty-one, for any other kind of unity than that for which He had asked at verse eleven, where beyond all question those whom He had in mind were the Eleven. Nay, He uses two little words which are decisive as to the kind of unity that He was praying for even when His thoughts took the widest and most distant range. These words are ἐν ἡμῖν ("in us") which appear to indicate clearly what He meant by the

⁷ John 17: 20, 21.

⁸ Verse 22.

⁹ Verse 24.

¹⁰ Verse 25.

petition, "that they may all be one."¹¹ There is nothing in the prayer that carries the least suggestion of Church constitution, organization or anything whatever that is of an external or institutional nature. His thought is as far away from that as could be, and is concerned with that which is deep, essential and unchangeable; namely, with the kind of unity which subsists between the Father and the Son. We are driven to the same conclusion by His words in verses twenty-two and twenty-three: "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." That which He asks for them is a unity in life, life eternal, which consists in knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent.¹² And this knowledge is theirs only who believe, and who through their faith enter into that relation to the Father and the Son which Jesus conceives in those words, "that they also may be *in us*;" and again, "I in them, and thou in me." In this knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, which is altogether inner, they have a common experience. They love God and the Son of God, Jesus Christ; they love one another; they have a joy which is strange to the world; and they have a hope laid up for them toward which they aspire as one man. This is the unity contemplated by our Lord in this memorable prayer.

¹¹ Verse 21.

¹² See verses 2 and 3.

VIII

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN
UNITY (*Continued*)

THE UNITY TAUGHT BY CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES

THE conclusion to which we have come is confirmed by a careful study of the discourse delivered by Jesus to His disciples just before He gave Himself up into the hands of those who sought His life. It is found in chapters thirteen to sixteen of St. John's Gospel. Beginning at the thirty-first verse of the thirteenth chapter and continuing, with a few brief interruptions, to the end of the sixteenth chapter, they are His farewell sermon. The seventeenth chapter is the prayer after the sermon; and it is strikingly noticeable that certain thoughts and expressions which occur here and there in the sermon are repeated in the prayer; and these throw a revealing light on the meaning of His soul when He was praying for the unity of His followers.

We may observe the working of the mind of our Lord during the sermon and the prayer by a comparative study of selected passages from the two.

The consciousness of the fact that He was about to return to the Father Who had sent Him was present with Him and showing itself in many ways throughout the discourse. This thought weighed with equal force

upon His heart in the prayer. The following excerpts will make this plain.¹

CHAPTER XIII

VERSE 33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you.

CHAPTER XIV

VERSE 2. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.

28. Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father.

CHAPTER XVI

VERSE 5. But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6. But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

16. A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me.

17. Some of his disciples there-

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 11. And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are. 12. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

24. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.

¹ For the convenience of the reader the quotations from the sermon and the prayer, except in a few instances, are given in parallel columns, the American Revised Version being followed.

fore said one to another, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father?

28. I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.

That His mind was taken up with His disciples, the things that were to befall them, their work and that which they needed to fit them for it and sustain them in it is abundantly manifest in the discourse which was addressed to them; likewise, in the prayer which was in the main for them. He knew and told them that they were *not of the world*, and that they had nothing to expect of the world but *hatred* and persecution; and in His prayer He dwells upon this and repeatedly asks that they may be kept.

CHAPTER XV

VERSE 18. If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

CHAPTER XVI

VERSE 1. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 11. And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me.

14. I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. 16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

not be caused to stumble. 2. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God. 3. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me.

33. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Moreover, He cheered them with the assurance of His own victory over the world (16: 33), and promised to send unto them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who should be in them and abide with them forever (14: 16, 17, 26; also 15: 26 and 16: 7).

Though they were not of the world they were to go out into the world to bear witness of Him through the word of the Gospel which they were commissioned to preach, and they were to receive the Spirit of truth to teach and to guide them; their mission and the promises He gave them were not forgotten in His prayer.

CHAPTER XV

VERSE 16. Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.

27. And ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 17. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. 18. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. 19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

CHAPTER XIV

VERSE 26. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

CHAPTER XVI

VERSE 13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.

He said in His discourse, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (15: 11, see also 16: 24); in the prayer He says, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves" (17: 13).

He assures them, in His discourse, of the love of the Father toward them; and He closes His prayer with words which show His yearning desire for the same blessing upon them.

CHAPTER XIV

VERSE 21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father.

CHAPTER XVI

VERSE 27. For the Father himself loveth you.

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 26. And I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.

He spoke of Himself as the True Vine and of His disciples as the branches, and urged them to abide in Him and in His love; this same relation of unity be-

tween Him and His followers occupies His thought in the prayer.

CHAPTER XV

VERSE 4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.

9. Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love.

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 21. That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us.

23. I in them, and thou in me.

26. . . . that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.

Several times during the long discourse He refers to the unity existing between Himself and the Father, and as many times lovingly draws His disciples into that holy oneness; ² this is reëchoed in His prayer.

CHAPTER XIV

VERSE 7. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? 10. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? . . . 11. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.

20. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 21. That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us. . . . 22.

And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; 23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one.

² Here, indeed, is a doctrine of atonement (at-one-ment) to which none can take exception.

23. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Near the beginning of His final hour of discourse with them He enjoined upon them a new commandment and, as an incentive to their keeping it, He told them the fine effect that it would have upon the world, and lest by any means they should forget He twice repeated the commandment; and when with uplifted eyes He prays to the Father, "that they may all be one," what is it that He asks but that in union with the Father and the Son they may have fellowship in love with one another, and that thus the world may be persuaded concerning Him that it was the Father who had sent Him?

CHAPTER XIII

VERSE 34. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

CHAPTER XV

VERSE 12. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.

17. These things I command you, that ye may love one another.

CHAPTER XVII

VERSE 20. Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; 21. That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us. . . . 22. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; 23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one.

And finally to remove all possible doubt and to make

it perfectly clear that in His prayer He was thinking and speaking in terms of life and not of external structure and rule within His Church, let the words with which He closes the prayer be carefully studied in connection with those at the beginning. There He said that He had received authority to give eternal life, and commented upon the meaning of the term in these words: "And this is life eternal, that they should *know thee* the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."³ At the end He says: "And *I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known*; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them."⁴ In other words, He says that He had been imparting to them that knowledge of the only true God and of Him whom God did send wherein is life eternal, in which life they should find unity and love.

Throughout the prayer He was thinking in terms of life, life in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. It is evident, therefore, that the unity for which He prayed was not one of regimentation, whose organizing governing principle is that of authority and whose continued existence is to be maintained by universal acceptance of and submission to such authority. Nay, that for which He prayed was a unity that has its roots in the inner life of believers and that manifests itself in love, and that freely, as becomes those who are sons of God.

If now we turn to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles we find everywhere the same idea of the unity that is highly extolled and to which Christians are

³ Verse 3.

⁴ Verse 26.

earnestly exhorted. We have already made mention of the beautiful life picture presented by the congregation at Jerusalem in the days immediately following the great Pentecost, how that among the multitude of believers there was "one heart and one soul."

Christ Himself, according to His own words, is the great magnet: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."⁵ Christ is the great reconciler and peacemaker in whom all differences and discords cease and come to unity. To this station God exalted Him "when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."⁶

Paul reminded the Gentile converts at Ephesus that what time they were separate from Christ they were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus," says he, "ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them

⁵ John 12: 32.

⁶ Eph. 1: 20-23.

both in one body unto God through the cross.”⁷ Thus He made Jew and Greek one, so that rejoicing the Jew could say to the Greek or the Greek to the Jew: “Through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.”⁸ In like manner Christ abolishes all other distinctions. In Him “there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus.”⁹ Along with those just mentioned other distinctions fall likewise; for, to quote again from Paul: “Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.”¹⁰ And may we not add to the list of distinctions that are done away in Christ and say, that in Him there is neither Roman Catholic nor Greek Catholic, neither Lutheran nor Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist? All who are in Him are one, one in Him whether they be one in anything else that may be named on earth or not; and through Him they have their access in one Spirit unto the Father.

This unity in Christ is a free gift—a status or relationship to Christ into which believers are received through their faith and which abides as long as they abide in Christ. They are one in Christ, and their unity in Him brings them into a relation of unity with one another. Moreover, this is a unity involving the relationship of personalities and influencing their whole spiritual attitude and behaviour toward one another.

⁷ Eph. 2: 12–16.

⁸ Eph. 2: 18.

⁹ Gal. 3: 28.

¹⁰ Col. 3: 11.

It affects also their life purposes, giving them unity and directing them to common ends.

A few simple quotations will suffice to show what was the apostolic conception of unity among the followers of Christ. St. Paul, in exhorting to unity very often uses some form of the word *φρονεῖν* (to think) with *τὸ αὐτὸ* (the same). Thus, he says to the Romans (Ch. 12: 16) *τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες*, "be of the same mind one toward another." At II Corinthians 13: 11 and Philippians 2: 2 and 4: 2, he employs this same form. At I Corinthians 1: 10 he urges "that ye all *speak* the same thing" (*ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες*). In another place (Phil. 2: 2) we find the word *σύνψυχοι* "being of one accord." St. Peter in his first Epistle uses a compound (*ὁμόφρονες*) to express the idea of *likemindedness* and adds to it other charming aspects of Christian unity: "Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded."¹¹ In the following passages from St. Paul unity in purpose and worship is emphasized as well as the inner unity of soul or spirit: "That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel."¹² "Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹³ This unity manifestly makes for friendliness between Christians, kindly feeling, sympathy, consideration one of another, love, helpfulness; likewise for fellowship in worship,

¹¹ I Peter 3: 8.

¹² Phil. 1: 27.

¹³ Rom. 15: 5, 6.

and for coöperation in doing the things to which all are called in the Lord, and which they can do more successfully by working together than they can by going about it singly. "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal,"¹⁴ or, as Moffatt has rendered this text into modern English, "each receives his manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Looked at from one side this unity relates us to God and the things of God; from the other, it relates us to other members of "the household of faith,"¹⁵ toward whom especially we are required as Christians to do good as we have opportunity. St. Paul contemplates these two sides, in the inverse order however, when from his prison in Rome he writes to the Ephesians and tenderly beseeches them "to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in you all."¹⁶

What has been said in regard to the idea of unity as set forth in the New Testament has not been advanced as an argument against unity in external organization and orderly administration; our sole purpose has been to show that the unity prayed for by Christ and urged by the apostles was something far more profound and vital than any form of organization and

¹⁴ I Cor. 12: 7.

¹⁵ Gal. 6: 10.

¹⁶ Eph. 4: 1-6.

government could be, or any arrangement for orderly expansion and development. It has not been our intention to depreciate in the least the value and importance of these externals; but to make it clear that no particular form of ecclesiastical constitution and administration can claim for itself on the basis of the New Testament that it and it alone represents the unity for which Christ prayed and that in order to attain to that unity all Christians of every land and every time must arrange themselves under that one particular form. This idea of unity which makes a *necessity* of one particular kind of organization and of the authority and rule of certain established clerical orders cannot but lead to divisions, because it is a kind of unity which places the emphasis on the external rather than on that which is internal and spiritual. This conception of unity is very likely, as has been abundantly proven in fact, to infringe upon the rights and privileges of individual members of Christ's body and even of large groups, and thus to stand opposed to the principle of Christian liberty and to invite schism.

Having said this much against any and every theory that makes uniformity of organization a necessity for Christian unity we would add that, so far from being inconsistent with the principle of Christian unity which we find in the New Testament, a uniform organization and administration of the Church would be a most beautiful and eloquent manifestation of the inner unity of faith and spirit, provided such unity actually existed, and provided the organization grew out of the principle of Christian liberty and were not imposed by

human authority. The inner unity must be sought first as the basis of organic union.

The unity which is everywhere extolled in the New Testament accords quite perfectly with Christian liberty. There can be no conflict between the two. They walk hand in hand, and the reason for this is that the vital moving power in both of them is love. This unity is in its very nature social and brings people together in worship, in care for one another, and in work for the furtherance of the Gospel and the service of humanity. In this way organization results quite spontaneously and freely; but we repeat, if there is to be unity of organization and administration, the inner unity must be there first.

The unity for which our Lord so fervently prayed is a "corporate unity" in the sense that all those who are one in Christ have been incorporated into Him, so that St. Paul could truly say: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof."¹⁷ Here he designated those to whom his epistle was addressed as collectively the body of Christ and as individually members of His body. And to whom was he writing? "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."¹⁸ He could not have given a clearer statement of what he understood by "the Church which is at Corinth." And he goes on in the salutation to include them "with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." Evidently he was not thinking of the Church as an

¹⁷ I Cor. 12: 27.

¹⁸ I Cor. 1: 2.

organized unit which has visibility, or that can be defined in terms of mathematical precision; but nevertheless, as a corporate unity including all those who are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" wherever they may be and whatsoever their form of organization. This is a corporate unity that is spiritual and invisible. The only way that this unity can become manifest is in and through the life of the members severally and collectively. It shows itself in all the offices and amenities of love, and in the activities of congregations, local or general, organized for worship and for work in forms suitable to the circumstances of time and place.

This unity completely satisfies the idea of the Church as the body of Christ, and at the same time preserves and maintains the principle of Christian liberty and enables it to guard itself against every encroachment. Our concept of it is: *Unitas in libertate et in unitate libertas.*

The essential conditions of Christian unity are the life in Christ and the liberty which lives by faith and works by love.

IX

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

THAT Christian liberty rightly understood and faithfully practiced is an organizing principle rather than a force in which disintegration is inherently present will appear from a careful study of the nature of its essential elements and the effects which it normally produces in human hearts. As we have seen, its elements are: freedom from every bondage which oppresses the soul from without, and an all-embracing love which alone can give the soul freedom from the leadings of dear self.

This liberty establishes a community of interests in those who have experienced it. It seeks suitable avenues of expression, and desires to know itself better and to grow ever toward maturity. It perceives the need of defending and maintaining itself against whatsoever foes may assail it. And it creates a certain longing to extend its blessings to those who have not yet received it. For all of these reasons it very naturally draws together those who know it, even though they know it but partially and imperfectly. Especially will they be inclined to congregate for fellowship since they have this promise from Him who is the Author of their liberty: "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing

that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹

Furthermore, there were certain things which Christ the Lord had appointed unto His disciples to do for their own establishment in this liberty and for the extension of it to others. Without doubt they had learned from Him, whether He had appointed certain days and hours or not, that they were to pray, and pray together; for they went directly from the mount of the ascension to the upper room in Jerusalem where they were waiting according to His instruction; and there the eleven “all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer.”²

There is good reason to believe also that immediately after the day of Pentecost the believers who were then baptized and added to the Church regularly met together not only for instruction in the Word and for prayer, but also to receive the Lord’s Supper. It is difficult to come to any other rational interpretation of the words: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in *the breaking of bread* and the prayers.”³ Whether before this the apostles and other believers had worshipped in this way or not has been left entirely to our own surmising. However that may have been, there can be no doubt that the Lord intended that they should do this, and that they so understood Him. So far as we know, He did not lay down any rules and tell them how often

¹ Matt. 18: 19, 20.

² Acts 1: 14.

³ Acts 2: 42.

they were to do this; but that it was to be always among His disciples an act of highest devotion cannot be doubted.

Their work henceforth was to be directed to the end of bringing men to Christ that they also might receive salvation. They were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Now for the orderly conduct of their assemblies, for their worship, which in all the earliest liturgies culminated in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and for the carrying out of their appointed work of preaching the Gospel to the ends of the earth, organization would be required; and some person or persons must take the lead in effecting it.

What light have we, then, as to the kind of organization that was required? For this structure of the temple of the living God was there any "pattern that was showed" them which they were commanded to follow, and disregard of which would imperil or upset the ministry of grace among men?

If any specific arrangement, exclusive of every other, for the bestowal of the great salvation was indispensable it could not be left to the erring judgment of men. If a particular order of ministry, through which alone grace and salvation could be conferred, was essential to Christ's plan, then it would be inconceivable that definite and authenticated provision should not have been made for the institution of such

⁴ Mark 16: 15 and Matt. 28: 19.

an order and for an indefectible succession therein throughout the ages. On the other hand, if Christ did not definitely institute such an order and/or give instruction to His apostles concerning it, it is fair to conclude that He did not regard this as an essential part of His plan.

Now we have no evidence whatever that Jesus ever discoursed with His disciples on this subject; and if He did we cannot but feel that two of the twelve who were with Him all those years, even to the day of His ascension, and who have left extended accounts of what He did and said, SS. Matthew and John, are inexcusable for their failure to record a matter of so great importance as this. Nay, surely the Holy Spirit would have brought it to their remembrance,⁵ if their memories were in need of assistance for anything of such outstanding importance! The hypothesis of an unrecorded institution of an order of priests seems incredible. We cannot believe that Matthew and John were such incompetent witnesses; and we are unwilling to discredit the testimony of the New Testament writers by supposing that they failed in so cardinal a matter as this was, if it was indeed necessary for the building and perpetuation of the Church of Christ on earth.

Now, their very first attempt at organization reflects no knowledge on the part of Peter and the other apostles of any word of Christ as to how a vacancy in the apostolate was to be filled. Their procedure was that of men who were free, who had received no pre-

⁵ John 14: 26.

scribed order from the Lord nor power as of themselves to fill "the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away." They put forward two of the men who had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, and prayed that He would show which of them He had chosen; and then they cast lots and by lot Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles, to be a witness with them of the resurrection.⁶ Nothing is said about priesthood or consecration or the laying on of hands.

It seems evident that Christ did not at any time set up a hierarchy, or do anything that could fairly be interpreted as planning for one. How well might He have done it in connection with the last Supper, especially if that was meant to be a sacrifice! Since He did no such thing He could not have thought it necessary or desirable to do it.

Jesus did, from the beginning of His ministry and until the day of His ascension, have in mind a ministry of preaching and witness bearing. In His last discourse before the crucifixion He said to the eleven: "and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."⁷ And when He was about to be received up into heaven, He said: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."⁸ They were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. They were to proclaim forgiveness of sins to those who would repent and believe. They were to

⁶ Acts 1: 15-26.

⁷ John 15: 27.

⁸ Acts 1: 8. No authority is given them to appoint another.

baptize; they were to eat and drink in the Lord's Supper, and certainly might before all others officiate at such times; but not as priests. In the whole of the New Testament nothing is said of a priesthood in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. That for which Christ so diligently prepared them was the ministry of preaching and bearing witness. They knew that their work was preëminently "the ministry of the word."⁹

These men and those who came after them were not under the law, but under grace. The Old Testament had passed away with all of its sacrifices and its priesthood. From all this Christ set them free. They were children of a New Covenant, as our Lord clearly indicated when He took the cup and gave it to them saying, "Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."¹⁰ His was the sacrifice once offered for the sins of the world. He provided for no other sacrifice in the worship of the children of the New Covenant. He left no charge or commission to His apostles to set up any sacrifice or priesthood. They could not, therefore, in the exercise of their Christian liberty, presume to enter into His Office and stand between God and His people as priests with sacrifices and offerings. This would have been to discount the work of Christ, our great High Priest, and horribly to obscure the value of His all-atoning sacrifice. Neither the apostles nor anybody else had any commission or freedom to do this.

⁹ Acts 6: 4.

¹⁰ Matt. 26: 27f; Luke 22: 20 R. V.

But they were free to go and preach the Gospel, to bear witness to Christ and His all-sufficient salvation, and to administer the sacraments. They were bidden by Him to do this. They were free also to organize; that is, to provide the Church with all such orderly arrangements as the circumstances and needs of time and place might require for the better performance of the things which they had been bidden to do, for the care of the members of the body, and for their furtherance in faith and in all that pertains to the development of a true Christian life.

There is every indication that organization was a free and natural growth suggested and conditioned at every stage by circumstances and needs. Reference has already been made to the gatherings of the early Christians for prayer, worship and instruction; also to the choice by lot of Matthias to take the place of Judas in the apostolate. Besides this it would seem that for a time there was little or no organization. The apostles of course were the central figures; naturally they were the leaders: and it would appear that at the first they had not only conducted the worship and done the preaching, but that they had also borne the responsibility of seeing that the needs of all were supplied in "the daily ministration" out of the common store.¹¹ But the time came when the apostles thought it not meet that they should forsake the Word of God and serve tables; and so they called all the disciples together, both the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebrews, and proposed to them that they should choose out seven

¹¹ Acts 4: 34-37 and 5: 1, 2.

men from among them whom they, the apostles, might appoint over "this business." The people were pleased with the proposition and elected the seven men and presented them to the apostles; and the appointment was made with prayer and the laying on of hands by the apostles.¹² The need and the most obvious way to meet it satisfactorily explains all, without imputing to Christ any previous legislation, or institutional *ordering* of any man or men with conferring of exclusive authority upon them to rule in the Church or to dispense office and grace. If Christ had begun such an institutional arrangement and had instructed His apostles as to how in detail He would have all things ordered in His Church, the first thing for them to do would have been to complete His scheme by organizing the congregation in Jerusalem accordingly. Thus, when the need arose for a particular kind of service, such as that involved in "the daily ministration,"¹³ the organization would have been ready at hand. The apostles would not have found themselves confronted with a situation for which they were unprepared. Further, it is hardly conceivable that they would have given away any part of their own authority by admitting "the laity" to a voice in the matter. It was perfectly right and proper that they should pray; and, being Jews, familiar with the ancient custom of the laying on of hands, they might very naturally do that also, without attaching to the ceremony any more or other significance than it had in pre-Christian times. Thus we conclude that what they did on that occasion,

¹² Acts 6: 1-6.¹³ Acts 6: 1-6.

they did *because* and *as* it seemed good to them and to "the multitude of the disciples," and not by any prescriptive formula given them by Christ.

From this incident forward, to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, there is no record of or reference to any further act of organization in the church at Jerusalem. If an ordination or a consecration took place no mention is made of it. There are indications, however, that the sixth chapter of Acts does not leave us a complete picture of the organization as it had developed before the end of the period covered by the Book of Acts. To these indications we will now give some consideration.

Some years later, there appears upon the scene one who has not been mentioned by name, though probably included among certain of those who had awaited in prayer the promise of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ There were the Eleven, "with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." The names of Jesus' brethren are given by Matthew¹⁵ as James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. Mark¹⁶ gives the same list, naming Judas as the third and Simon last. Both of the evangelists place James at the head of the list. It would seem that the four of them were among those referred to as waiting and praying together with the apostles after the ascension. At this time, however, no one of them is singled out as having special prominence among the one hundred and twenty brethren who were assembled on one of those days. It was Peter who stood up and spoke.

¹⁴ Acts 1: 4, 5, 13-14.

¹⁵ Matt. 13: 55.

¹⁶ Mark 6: 3.

About nine years afterward, probably in 42 A. D., one James is mentioned in such a way as to indicate that he occupied a position of outstanding importance among the brethren at Jerusalem, and it is Peter who thus points him out. Peter had just escaped from prison and from death at the hands of Herod Agrippa I, and to the amazement of the company of those who were gathered together and praying for his deliverance he appeared in the midst of them. And when he had told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison, he said to them, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren.¹⁷ This James could not have been the brother of John. Herod had but a little while before killed that apostle with the sword.¹⁸ Of whom, then, did Peter speak? It is Paul who gives us the answer to this question. Some three years after his second stay in Damascus, following his conversion and his sojourn in Arabia, Paul went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas; and he tells us that on that occasion he saw, besides Peter, none other of the apostles, "save James the Lord's brother."¹⁹

Putting Paul's conversion in the year 34 A. D., this visit to Jerusalem could not have been earlier than about 38-40 A. D. By this time, therefore, James, the Lord's brother, must have come into whatever position of prominence he occupied in the Jerusalem church. But later on he looms larger. The next mention that is made of him in Acts, after Peter gave charge that the story of his wonderful deliverance be told unto James, is in connection with the account of

¹⁷ Acts 12: 17.

¹⁸ Acts 12: 2.

¹⁹ Gal. 1: 18, 19.

the gathering of the apostles and *elders* in Jerusalem to consider the question referred to them by the brethren of the Church at Antioch about circumcision, whether it was necessary for salvation. Here the "judgment" of James seems to have been decisive.²⁰ Again we meet with him when Paul, after his third missionary tour, went "bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem,"²¹ against the prayerful entreaties and dire prophecies of friends at both Tyre and Cæsarea. As when he came from Damascus to Jerusalem Paul went to see Peter, so now without losing any time he "went in unto James,"²² and rehearsed to him and *all the elders* "the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry." It should be added that Paul in Galatians speaks of James and Cephas and John as "they who were reputed to be pillars."²³

As to the character of James and especially his attitude toward the question which at that time troubled the inner life of the Church more than any other, from all that we can learn of him he was zealous for the law and was of the party in the Church which is spoken of as those "that were of the circumcision,"²⁴ as distinguished from those who had been quite freed from the Jewish contempt for the uncircumcised. So faithful in his observance of the law was James that there was given to him the surname of the Just. He was doubtless more reasonable in his attitude toward the Gentiles than were many of those who were of the party of the circumcision. He was of an irenic spirit,

²⁰ Acts 15: 1-22.

²¹ Acts 20: 22.

²² Acts 21: 18f.

²³ Gal. 2: 9.

²⁴ Acts 11: 2; Gal. 2: 12.

not holding his views with a mind closed to the arguments and persuasion of others but with one open to conviction. He could see both sides of a question, and perhaps was influenced at times rather by expediency than by principle, and had a desire to keep in with all parties. This impression is made by his speech in Acts 15: 13-21 and by the advice which he and the elders with him gave to Paul as recorded at Acts 21: 20-24. Of these two incidents we shall speak later.

Now, what was James, and when and how did he get to be what he was? If the tradition, which seems to have found voice first in Papias²⁵ (c. 145 A. D.) and which was passed on by subsequent writers in varying form, can be taken as evidence, he was the first "bishop" of Jerusalem. In the New Testament he is nowhere called bishop (*ἐπίσκοπος*). In fact he receives no official name whatever. He is spoken of once as "the Lord's brother."²⁶ There is no evidence that he ever performed any of those special functions which in later times came to be recognized as the exclusive privilege of the bishop. The word bishop as applied to James by Papias and those who followed him, seems to be a clear case of using a name current in Gentile communities for an office which in Jewish circles had a different name. Besides those officials, by whatever name they may have been designated, who were appointed as related in the sixth chapter of Acts, the only others spoken of in the Acts are *apostles and elders* (*πρεσβύτεροι*).²⁷ Each of these groups is sometimes

²⁵ Fragment X.

²⁷ Acts 15: 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16: 4.

²⁶ Gal. 1: 19.

mentioned by itself. As James was not an apostle in the sense in which the Twelve were, and as there is no intimation in the Acts that there was another office different in grade and function from that of the elders, the most reasonable conclusion is that he was an elder, and that he was called ὁ πρεσβύτερος, or *Zagen* the Hebrew for elder, or possibly the Aramaic equivalent. In the twenty-first chapter of Acts²⁸ there is an account of a meeting of the presbyters, and, while James is specially mentioned, there is nothing said to suggest the idea that he represented an Order higher than that of the other presbyters. He was, it is most reasonable to say, the president of the meeting; and to claim for him any higher dignity or power seems to be contradicted by the record. In stating the decision reached by the meeting, the forms used are "they said" and "we said,"²⁹ not "James said." But by whatever name he was called he was, until his death about 62 A. D., a man of great prominence in the church in Jerusalem, and his influence extended even beyond that center. This appears from the references to him in the Acts³⁰ and in Galatians.³¹ And if we prefer not to call him bishop, but presbyter, we do not thereby mean at all to detract from his position of outstanding importance.

When did James rise to the eminence which he evidently enjoyed for a considerable period of time? He is first brought definitely to our notice by Paul.³² At that time (c. 38 A. D.) he certainly had not reached

²⁸ Verses 18ff.

²⁹ Verses 20, 23.

³⁰ Ch. 12: 17; 15: 13-21; 21: 18. ³¹ Gal. 2: 11, 12. ³² Gal. 1: 19.

the place of highest authority in the Church; though, doubtless, even then he was a rising man among the brethren in Jerusalem. Peter was the man Paul went to see, and James seems to be mentioned rather incidentally. Not long after the death of James, the brother of John (c. 42 A. D.), we hear Peter himself referring to James in a way which suggests his importance.³³ It was about this time (compare Acts 11: 30 and 12: 2) that elders (presbyters) first appear in the narrative, when we are told that the disciples in Antioch "determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."³⁴ Prior to this time the apostles are mentioned alone as directing the affairs in the Church³⁵ without reference to any other class of officials. From this time forward "the apostles and elders" act together³⁶ until the apostles after 52 A. D. drop entirely out of the picture. After that time the elders alone, with James, have direction.³⁷ It seems clear, therefore, that as early as 42 A. D. the apostles were sharing their responsibilities with a class of officials called presbyters. The latter must have been chosen, therefore, about that date, possibly somewhat earlier, but certainly not later. The slaying of James, the brother of John, by Herod, the imprisonment of Peter with the intention of killing him also, the aging of the apostles and the fact that some of them, Peter³⁸ especially, were even then

³³ Acts 12: 17.

³⁵ Acts 6: 6; 8: 14; 9: 27; 11: 1.

³⁷ Acts 21: 18.

³⁴ Acts 11: 29, 30.

³⁶ Acts 15: 2, 4, 6, 22, 23.

³⁸ Acts 9: 32-10: 48.

absenting themselves from Jerusalem and preaching the word of the Gospel among the Gentiles, were probably some of the reasons which led to the appointment of presbyters. Whenever it occurred, James was probably one of those chosen; and in all likelihood he was from the beginning the president of the body of presbyters.

Is there, then, any indication as to how James came to be elevated to the position of leadership among the presbyters? I believe that there is; and it is not far to seek. The chief reason is to be found, I believe, in the fact that James had shown himself from the beginning a zealous champion of the law as over against those who preached the liberty which Christ had brought and who were ready to admit the Gentiles to the blessings of the Gospel without circumcision. He was, therefore, popular not only with the Christians who were overwhelmingly Jewish and were zealous for the law, but he was also held in high regard even among the unbelieving Jews.

There was a clean, clear break between Christ and Moses, between Christianity and Judaism. This had taken place through the teaching of Christ Himself and through the rejection of Him by the Jews. His was altogether a new teaching, in regard both to the manner and the content. None of their prophets had spoken as He did, nor any of their living teachers. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."³⁹ He set Himself and His doctrine distinctly out, beyond and above all that had gone be-

³⁹ Matt. 7: 29.

fore. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you," ⁴⁰ is a form of expression which is not rightly evaluated if we take it as having application to just a few things which He wished to emphasize in the Sermon on the Mount. It really sounded the keynote of all His preaching and teaching, and was an assertion of His own freedom from the traditional and legalistic interpretations of the past and from the narrow life which consists in strict conformity to the letter of law when the spirit of it is far more beautiful and much rather to be sought. After the Sermon on the Mount it is not new or strange to hear His "Verily, verily, I say unto you" addressed to enemies,⁴¹ to seekers after the truth⁴² and to those who had forsaken all to follow Him.⁴³ Though an advance in the teaching about Himself, it is quite in line when He says: "Before Abraham was born, I am."⁴⁴ "It is my father that glorifieth me; of whom ye say that he is your God."⁴⁵ It is not at all surprising to hear Him say: "The Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath."⁴⁶ Yet, it was just these things which brought Him to the cross; for they judged Him, according to their law, guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death.⁴⁷ The break was complete in their judgment, and in truth, in that "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth."⁴⁸

It was to be expected, even as Christ had foretold, that this same breach would manifest itself between

⁴⁰ Matt. 5: 21.

⁴¹ John 8: 51, 58.

⁴² John 3: 3, 5, 11.

⁴³ John 13: 16 and frequently.

⁴⁴ John 8: 58.

⁴⁵ John 8: 54.

⁴⁶ Luke 6: 5.

⁴⁷ Mark 14: 64.

⁴⁸ Rom. 10: 4.

His followers on the one hand and the unbelieving Jews on the other. And so it did. Soon after Pentecost the persecution set in, first taking the form of arresting and imprisoning the apostles "because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead,"⁴⁹ and because by their hand "were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" and "believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."⁵⁰ Within the Church, however, there was as yet no note of discord. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul;"⁵¹ and aside from the two incidents already referred to, the one about Ananias and Sapphira⁵² and the other about "the daily ministration,"⁵³ both of which concerned things material, there does not appear to have been any question which was a cause of division among them until about the time that Paul came back from Damascus to Jerusalem (c. 38 A. D.). When he sought to join himself to the disciples they were all afraid of him.⁵⁴ They could not believe that he who a while ago had "laid waste the church"⁵⁵ had really become a disciple. When through the good offices of Barnabas the apostles had formed a more kindly estimate of him, he went in and out among them in Jerusalem as a disciple "preaching boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus."⁵⁶ He did not confine his labours to the believers, but paid special attention to the Grecian Jews⁵⁷ thinking, perhaps, that

⁴⁹ Acts 4: 2.⁵⁰ Acts 5: 12, 14.⁵¹ Acts 4: 32.⁵² Acts 5: 1-11.⁵³ Acts 6: 1.⁵⁴ Acts 9: 26.⁵⁵ Acts 8: 3.⁵⁶ Acts 9: 27.⁵⁷ Not Christians in this case as at chap. 6: 1.

they would the more readily receive the Gospel. But as he "disputed against" them, doubtless maintaining that they must believe in Christ if they would be saved, instead of trusting to circumcision and the law, they would have killed him. Then "the brethren" thought that the best thing to do was to get this fearless preacher of faith as far away from Jerusalem as possible; and so "they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."⁵⁸ Evidently there was already great caution, if not a spirit of compromise, on the part of some in the Church; and not long after this we find clear evidence of the existence of two schools or parties in the Church at Jerusalem. One of them was what we may term the evangelical party, and the other the legalistic. The occasion for the manifestation of this difference was the return of Peter from Cæsarea where he had baptized Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and all that were with him in his house, Gentiles. As soon as he came to Jerusalem a meeting was called, and "they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."⁵⁹ These represented a party in the church, the party of the circumcision. They were those who stood for circumcision and for excluding from their fellowship and from the salvation that is in Jesus those who were uncircumcised. To this party belonged "certain men who came down *from Jerusalem*" to Antioch "and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved."⁶⁰ To

⁵⁸ Acts 9: 30.⁵⁹ Acts 11: 2, 3.⁶⁰ Acts 15: 1.

this party also belonged those of whom Paul speaks when he tells of Peter's dissimulation in Antioch: "For before that *certain came from James*, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision."⁶¹ And behold who is the head of the party! It is James, the Lord's brother. And it was by his zeal for the law, which doubtless he manifested consistently from an early day, that by 42 A. D. he was president of the body of presbyters, all of whom no doubt represented the dominant party of the circumcision and were elected by it. In fact by this time there seems to have been little left but this party.

This interpretation of the history explains everything that is said about James as well as his otherwise inexplicable rise to power. Let us take his several appearances in the story of the Acts. The first is in the twelfth chapter⁶² (c. 42 A. D.). It was when Peter told the company of those who were praying for him of his marvelous deliverance by the angel from chains and imprisonment and from death at the hands of Herod Agrippa. Then he said to them: "Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren." Why to James? Just because he was the head of the party of the circumcision which insisted that salvation could be obtained only by keeping the law of Moses and maintained an attitude of exclusiveness toward the uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter was not of this party. He did not believe nor preach their doctrine, nor did he conform to their views in regard to association with

⁶¹ Gal. 2: 11, 12.

⁶² Acts 12: 17.

the Gentiles. He desired that James especially should be informed of the wonderful deliverance that had been granted him, and that thus he might be led to see that God was with one who was not a preacher of circumcision nor a despiser of those who were known as "the uncircumcision."

The next appearance of James was when Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church at Antioch to Jerusalem (c. 52 A. D.) to the apostles and elders, to learn from them the truth about this very question of circumcision, whether it were so that they could not be saved without it.⁶³ When those two came to Jerusalem and told the things which God had wrought by them among the Gentiles, they were met at once with the opposition of those who were of the party of the circumcision. These are described as "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed,"⁶⁴ and their ready verdict was: "It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." When a little later the apostles and elders met to consider the matter in the presence of the whole church,⁶⁵ there was much discussion occasioned, of course, by the conflicting views of the two parties. After so long a time Peter, as representing the evangelical party, took the floor against the doctrine of salvation by circumcision and the works of the law, and, citing the things which he had witnessed in the house of Cornelius, he maintained that God had made it plain that Jew and Gentile alike are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus by faith, and that therefore they should not think of putting a

⁶³ Acts 15: 1ff.

⁶⁴ Acts 15: 5.

⁶⁵ Acts 15: 6, 7, 22.

yoke upon the neck of the disciples which the experience of their own nation had proved unbearable.⁶⁶ Barnabas and Paul seconded him with a rehearsal of the wonders which God had wrought among the Gentiles through them.⁶⁷ Then James, as the leader of the other party, addressed the listening assembly.⁶⁸ Taking no notice at all of what Paul and Barnabas had reported, he directed attention to the plea of Peter, saying that he, whom he chose to call by his Jewish name Symeon, had "rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." James then pointed out that what Symeon had said about God's dealing with the Gentiles through him was in accord with words of prophecy which he quoted. Upon these grounds he was ready, as spokesman for the party of the circumcision to announce his own decision. It was this: "That we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood."⁶⁹ There is no word about the grace of God or of faith such as we find in Peter's speech; but only certain rules and restrictions. And he added this somewhat ambiguous reason: "For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath." Whatever his purpose in this saying, it at any rate revealed his Mosaic bias. He was ready, for the sake of bringing both sides together, to follow the

⁶⁶ Acts 15: 7-11.⁶⁷ Acts 15: 12.⁶⁸ Acts 15: 13-21.⁶⁹ Acts 15: 19, 20.

logic of events supported as it was by prophecy, but he was not willing to come squarely out and endorse Peter's words: "We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they."⁷⁰ Nor was he willing to let Moses be without a word of recognition. That this is not a misrepresentation of the proceedings on that occasion is evidenced by the words, "it seemed good unto us, *having come to one accord*,"⁷¹ which appear in the letter addressed by them to the Gentile brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. It should be noted, too, that the letter was sent not by James as bishop, but by the apostles and elders, and that they say: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to *us*, etc."⁷² And from what we know of James and Peter we would judge that the mind that conceived the letter was that of Peter and not that of James.

The third and last look we have at James is when Paul, after his third missionary tour was ended, went up to Jerusalem for the last time (c. 59 A. D.). The account of what took place follows:

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry. And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews

⁷⁰ Acts 15: 11.

⁷¹ Acts 15: 25.

⁷² Acts 15: 28.

who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? They will certainly hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law.”⁷³

Why did Paul go to James? Just for the reason that James was now the president of the body of presbyters and the leading man in the Church. He wielded great influence in the Christian community which was very largely composed of those who were of the party of the circumcision. Paul needed his favour, for he had been warned⁷⁴ through the Spirit of the things that the Jews would do to him if he should set foot in Jerusalem. The advice which James and the whole body of the presbyters gave Paul was just such as we might have expected from the party then in power in the Church.

A brief statement in regard to the subsequent history of the church in Jerusalem seems to be in place here. The flight of the Christians to Pella before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. brought to an end the church in that city as it is presented to our view in the Acts of the Apostles. “Between the original Jewish Christian Church at Jerusalem and the Church which grew up in the purely Gentile city of Ælia

⁷³ Acts 21: 17-24.

⁷⁴ Acts 21: 3, 4, 8-11.

(built by Hadrian after the second destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 135) there was a complete breach of continuity.”⁷⁵ This new Church reflects in its constitution the changes which had taken place quite generally in the direction of episcopacy.

This somewhat lengthy account of the Christian community in Jerusalem and the part that James played therein has been given for the sake of the light which it throws on the question of Church Order in that city. There is nothing whatever to indicate that they started out with a complete Church Order with James as bishop and with presbyters and deacons under him. All that we find at first is the apostolic group and a number of believing men and women who foregathered with them, Peter taking the position of leader. There is no indication that the apostles proceeded to organize according to a prescribed plan handed them by the Lord. If Jesus had seen fit to provide a plan, it seems most unlikely that He would have appointed James rather than Peter or John to sit in the bishop's Chair. Furthermore, if James was the kind of man that Jesus would have placed at the head of His Church, it seems almost inconceivable that He should have called a man like Paul to be an apostle, or that he should have given to Peter the vision which he had at Joppa, which jolted him out of his Jewish exclusiveness and led him on toward the same larger view of the grace of Christ that Paul held. No, everything points to the conclusion that the process of establishing a

⁷⁵ “The Primitive Church,” by B. H. Streeter, the Macmillan Company, p. 46.

Church Order in Jerusalem, such as it was, was that of a free development. At the first the apostles were plainly the recognized leaders, though the people also were given a voice in the matter of whom they would have over them. It is not so certain that the authority of the apostles continued to be regarded for very long as binding. One gets the impression that it came to be more completely recognized outside of Jerusalem than within, and that somehow others, the presbyters, rose up beside the apostles and shared place and power with them; and that this came to pass not without the consent at least of the people, all of whom were "zealous for the law." Many of them had been gathered in from the ranks of the priesthood, for we are told that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."⁷⁶ These especially would naturally agitate in favour of a legalistic régime.

If it be objected that this interpretation of the history implies a freedom that is dangerous and, in the case under discussion, suggests the actual working of unsanctified human nature in the form of ambition and party spirit, this will not be denied. The answer is that liberty is always dangerous; but that liberty is much rather to be chosen, along with the danger which accompanies it, than a bondage which secures a certain order and prescribed course of action by making mere pawns of the Lord's freemen. This interpretation may also throw some light on an otherwise obscure statement in the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians: "Peter through unrighteous envy, endured

⁷⁶ Acts 6: 7.

not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him." ⁷⁷

To undertake the story of the beginning and final settlement of the question of Church Order in Antioch, Cæsarea, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome and Alexandria, and in other less conspicuous places, would take us too far afield. In order to establish our thesis, that organization and the arrangements for the discharge of the manifold ministry in the churches first established were free, in the sense that they were not effected in accordance with any predetermined plan handed down by the Lord, the Head of the Church, it is necessary only to point out the fact that one going from church to church in the lifetime of the apostles, and for a considerable period thereafter, would have found various forms of administration and a diversity of nomenclature for those who ministered and ruled in the churches. He would have found also changes then going on in regard to these matters, clearly indicative of a free development. There was, perhaps, no other church whose story ran quite parallel to that of Jerusalem. At Antioch there were "prophets and teachers" ⁷⁸ who were in authority and ministered, and who, by prayer and the laying on of hands, set apart Paul and Barnabas to the work to which God had called them, and sent them forth as missionaries. Wherever Paul went he entered into the synagogues of the Jews, and in providing for a settled ministry he appointed *presbyters* in every church, following the pattern of

⁷⁷ Chap. V.

⁷⁸ Acts 13: 1.

the synagogue. At Philippi he possibly made an exception in giving official names to those who were set over the church as its ministers. At any rate, whether by his own act or by the choice of the Church, their ministers were called "bishops and deacons;"⁷⁹ and Paul, in writing to them, addressed them as bishops and thus recognized the title. Likewise, when at his summons the presbyters of the church at Ephesus came to him at Miletus, he called them bishops ("overseers").⁸⁰

In both of these cities at that time the authority of these bishops (plural in each instance) was local, and they seem to have exercised a concurrent jurisdiction, no one being over another. At Corinth, as we learn from Clement of Rome in his epistle written to that church in 96 A. D., the ruling authorities were presbyters, or presbyter-bishops; and he writes in such a way as to imply that the same was true of the church in Rome. And, as regards Rome, this is borne out by *The Shepherd* of Hermas written at Rome about 100 A. D., as Streeter has convincingly argued. In that writing Hermas "refers to 'the presbyters,' 'the rulers,' 'the bishops.' But these are always mentioned in the plural, and all the references imply in the church of Rome the same kind of collegiate rule by presbyter-bishops which is evidenced in the epistle of Clement."⁸¹

Later on, in the second century, a process of change which had begun here and there before 100 A. D., ac-

⁷⁹ Phil. 1: 1.

⁸¹ "The Primitive Church," pp. 211-216.

⁸⁰ Acts 20: 28.

celerated, motivated and guided by the necessity of guarding the churches against the rising Gnostic heresies, resulted in the establishment of an order which was monarchic in principle. It became the prevailing practice that one man was recognized as having chief authority and rule in his church; and to him was given by way of preëminence the name of bishop (*ἐπίσκοπος*), a name which on account of its Gentile origin and associations, was generally adopted in preference to the term "presbyter" which recalled Jewish traditions and associations. And all this was done freely, without appeal to any word or command of Christ. And it was perfectly in accord with the liberty which the Church had received from its Lord. In all matters of outward form the Church ever has the liberty, nay, the duty to change if need be, in order to adjust itself to changing circumstances and conditions. Only in that which is essential to its being has it no right to change.

The conclusion from the foregoing presentation of facts in regard to conditions in the primitive church, or churches, is that no one particular form of organization or order of ministry is *per se* necessary to the existence of the Church, or to be preferred by reason of divine appointment to any other. The several forms are alike good or bad according to times, places, circumstances and needs. Therefore, the Lord gave His Church liberty in these matters, leaving it to sanctified reason and common sense to determine what is most suitable at any given time and place and best adapted to meet the needs of the situation.

X

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATION

IT is our purpose in the present chapter to consider the subject of Church organization as it is related to that of Christian liberty. A careful study of these two together ought to lead to some interesting conclusions.

We have heard much in recent times about the *re-union* of the Churches. This is a misleading expression. It takes too much for granted. It implies that there was a golden age, a happy time, when the whole of the Church was embraced in one visible organization ruled from the head downward, and that then there were no dividing issues between the Christians of one country and another, or between the various bodies of Christians in the same country. As a matter of fact there never has been such a glorious time. If the only question remaining to be settled before organic union might take place were, what time shall be taken as furnishing the ideal of Church union, it can hardly be doubted that this question would leave the Churches as badly divided as they are to-day. No such time has ever existed except in theory. We are in the same danger here of reading our ideals back into some age that is past, and thinking of it as "the good old times," that we are when we contrast the economic and moral

conditions of our own day with those of former periods.

The situation which presents itself to view at the close of the first century, and even later, exhibits nothing suggestive of a system of Church government beyond the needs of the congregation. There were many churches, but they were not organized into one corporate Church.

These numerous churches were spread over a wide area. If we were to make a cross at every place on the map of the Roman Empire where the records show that there was, before 100 A. D., a group of Christians who were spoken of as a church, we should mark the following cities: Jerusalem, Cæsarea,¹ Antioch in Syria; Lystra and Iconium in the province of Lycaonia; Antioch in Pisidia; Laodicea, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, Pergamos, Smyrna and Ephesus² all in the province of Asia; Philippi³ and Thessalonica in Macedonia; Cenchrea⁴ and Corinth in Achaia. We may place a cross at the City of Rome also, though those at Rome are not spoken of in any of the New Testament writings as a Church. Paul addressed his Epistle to the Romans thus: "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints."

In the closing chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, written in 58 A. D., reference is made to a house in Rome in which there was a "church."⁵ It was the house of Prisca and Aquila, the mention of whose names was sufficient to stir to thanksgiving many

¹ Acts 18: 22.

² Acts 20: 17.

³ Phil. 4: 15.

⁴ Rom. 16: 1.

⁵ Rom. 16: 5.

hearts and especially that of St. Paul. About a year before this they were dwelling at Ephesus, where also they had a church in their house.⁶ In the house of Nymphas⁷ at Colosse or Laodicea there was a church, as also in the house of Philemon.⁸ Probably there were other churches which met in private houses, the names of whose owners have not been preserved.

At the following places the word had been preached in the days of the apostles, and at some of them there were groups of Christians, if they had not indeed been gathered and organized into churches: Lydda, Joppa and Ptolemais in Palestine; Tyre in Phœnicia; Salamis and Paphos in the Island of Cyprus; Perga in Pamphylia; Troas in Mysia; Berœa in Macedonia; and Puteoli in Italy.

There were churches in Judea outside of Jerusalem; probably also in Galilee and Samaria.⁹ There were other churches in Syria besides the one at Antioch; Cilicia, too, had its churches.¹⁰ There were also in Paul's day churches in Galatia¹¹ and probably in Phrygia.¹² It is not unlikely that there was a church in Alexandria before the close of the first century. Tradition, first vocal for us in Eusebius (c. 311 A. D.)¹³ but lacking the support even of the great Alexandrian writers Clement and Origen, has it that Mark was founder of the church in that city. The first reliable information we have of Christian work being carried on in Alexandria is that of Clement (200 A. D.), who

⁶ I Cor. 16: 19.

⁹ Gal. 1: 22; Acts 9: 31.

¹² Acts 18: 23.

⁷ Col. 4: 15.

¹⁰ Acts 15: 41.

⁸ Philemon 2.

¹¹ Gal. 1: 2.

¹³ Hist. Eccl. II, 16.

tells us that Pantænus had founded (c. 180 A. D.) a catechetical school there. We can hardly doubt that a church had been established much earlier.

It will be noted that the country which had by far the largest number of churches in those early days was Asia Minor, first referred to under this name by Paulus Orosius in the fifth century.

These churches of which we have spoken were in no way organically united. There was no visible head, no universally acknowledged official or body of officials, sitting and exercising authority over all of them and holding them together in one government with one discipline, one ritual, one program of observances and a common task. Such an organization was impossible because it would not have been tolerated by the Roman Empire. As soon as Christianity was recognized as being distinct from the Jews' religion it suffered in fact as a *religio illicita*, although it had not been definitely and formally placed on the list as such until the time of Trajan (112 A. D.). The Christians were from the beginning subject to persecution. The cry, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods,"¹⁴ was heard not only in reference to Paul at Athens; it was on the lips of the upholders of the pagan religions everywhere, and was said in condemnation of Christians. As denying the state's religion and proposing another in its stead, they were regarded as enemies of the state. It was necessary, therefore, that they should avoid every suggestion of being a world power and any show of corporate unity, such as would

¹⁴ Acts 17: 18.

be involved in a centralized organization and in representative gatherings for deliberation and concerted action. Besides they did not consider an organization and government analogous to that of the nations of this world as necessary for them, or even as desirable; for there was nothing of which they were more profoundly certain than that here they had "no continuing city," not even a prolonged sojourn. Their citizenship was in heaven, from whence they instantly expected the coming of the Lord Jesus.¹⁵ As long as such conditions lasted, an organized world Church was not possible, neither could it have seemed to Christians either pertinent or important.

Nevertheless, there was a unity in which all Christians were embraced. It was the unity of a family with God as Father; ¹⁶ with Christ as the first-born among many brethren ¹⁷ and the Head of the body, the Church; ¹⁸ with all the members of the one body as "brethren"; with one Spirit, one faith, one hope and one baptism.¹⁹

Whatever organization the church had was local. Each church was responsible also for the management of its own affairs, whether through presbyters or "bishops"; and the presbyter or "bishop" of one church might not presume to act with authority in the matters of another church. If one church or bishop communicated with another it was as an equal with an equal. As evidence note particularly this greeting from the church at Jerusalem: "The apostles and the eld-

¹⁵ Phil. 3: 20.

¹⁶ Eph. 4: 6.

¹⁷ Rom. 8: 29.

¹⁸ Eph. 4: 15; Col. 1: 18.

¹⁹ Eph. 4: 4, 5.

ers, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.”²⁰

From the epistle of Polycarp (c. 115 A. D.) and his co-presbyters of Smyrna to “the Church of God sojourning at Philippi” we note that the Philippians were addressed as “brethren,” that Polycarp, disclaiming any assumption of authority, wrote to them upon their own invitation, that he discoursed upon the duties of presbyters, deacons and others, and exhorted all to righteousness. Even Ignatius of Antioch, who did more for the establishment of episcopacy than any other leader of his time, said in his epistle to the Ephesians (c. 115 A. D.): “I do not issue orders to you . . . I speak to you as fellow-disciples with me. I have therefore taken upon me first to exhort you that ye would all run together in accordance with the will of God.”

The First Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (96 A. D.) which is generally acknowledged as genuine, begins: “The Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth.” The name of Clement does not appear in the Epistle, though it is generally conceded that he was the author of it. It was a letter from one “sojourning” church to another of the same kind. A very serious trouble had risen in the church at Corinth; “a few rash and self-confident persons” had stirred up a sedition in the church, the result of which was the dismissal of certain of the presbyters. The church desired counsel, and very naturally turned to Rome.

²⁰ Acts 15: 23.

They of Rome addressed the Corinthians as "dear brethren" and apologized that they had been "somewhat tardy" in giving attention to this matter. The letter praises the former life of the Corinthians, and attributes the "detestable sedition" to envy. It then discourses on the evils which flow from envy, exhorts to repentance, humility, peace and obedience to those who have the rule over them. It nowhere assumes the tone of authority, but recognizes quite completely that authority and power to restore order belongs to the church at Corinth, and appeals to such of the presbyters as are noble-minded, compassionate and full of love to take the initiative and submit to the will of the majority,—that is, of the people, even though it may mean their departure for unknown lands. At Rome they had reached the opinion that those duly appointed as presbyters "with the consent of the whole church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry." But they do not take it upon themselves to reinstate any presbyters who may have been unjustly dismissed or to depose any who may have been chosen as a result of the sedition. All of this was left to the church itself.

Thus it is evident that in the early churches the authority of those who bore rule, whether they were called presbyters or bishops, was understood to be local; and that those of one church, while willing to give counsel and encouragement when asked to do so, did not obtrude themselves upon others as though pos-

sessing a superior authority. Not even Rome so presumed. The churches were equal, and the ministries were equal; and there was no organic union of the churches.

It is quite natural that there should have been a desire for some outward expression of the inner unity which existed among the churches, and also some provision for the maintenance of that unity and for the guidance of doctrinal development. There were, indeed, influences and movements at work in the sphere of religion which made this necessary, if the Gospel was to escape perversion and the Church saved from developing into discordant and rival establishments.

Among the religious movements that were agitating the times and bidding for the favour of men were the old pagan religions; pharisaic Judaism; certain sects representing a mixture of Judaism and Christianity, such as the Ebionites; and Gnosticism, in its various forms, exhibiting so many different attempts to explain the whole of existence and to satisfy the religious instincts and needs of mankind by a combination of ideas drawn from Grecian philosophy, oriental theosophy and Christianity. All of these Christianity had to combat; and in order to do this successfully it had everywhere to take stock of itself, that it might know what it was and be able instantly to mark and repudiate that which was not it. Furthermore, as might have been expected, there arose *within* the churches teachers whose minds were more or less imbued with the current beliefs and speculations, and there appeared trends or tendencies, theological, moral and traditional,

which emphasized the need not only of a recognized standard of doctrine but also of unified harmonious guidance and discipline.

In the midst of this clash of opinions and to meet the first of these needs it became necessary to subject the faith of the Church to intense intellectual processes. These studies took their rise from the Trinitarian foundation laid by the Lord in the institution of baptism,²¹ and the result was a confession of faith which was required of those who were candidates for baptism and which became known as the "rule of faith." This *Regula Fidei*, which obtained its ultimate form in the so-called Apostles' Creed, had a free development in the Church; it was not the product of any synod or council and depended not for its authority upon official sanction. Yet it obtained currency everywhere in essentially the same form; which may be explained on the theory of a common original or by intercommunication between the churches. At any rate it constituted an inner bond of unity between the churches in all parts of the empire, and a standard of faith and doctrine. It was for this reason that, notwithstanding the Christians were collected into congregations that were widely scattered and not yet organically united, it was possible from the earliest times to conceive of one Church and to speak of it as one body and as Catholic. There was one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

In the meantime also the idea of monarchical government in the Churches, finding occasion and its best justification in these same conflicts, took definite form

²¹ Matt. 28: 19.

and asserted itself with great power, until by the end of the second century the monarchical episcopate had succeeded in establishing itself firmly over the presbyterate in the "Catholic" churches everywhere. The bishop was now the one man in the Church who had supreme direction of affairs. Formerly authority and rule were in the hands of the body of presbyters under the presidency of one of their number, who, if he had any priority over the others, was only *primus inter pares*. The two terms, bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) and presbyter (πρεσβύτερος), had been interchangeable, and indicated no difference of rank or order between those bearing these titles. They were presbyter-bishops. But now, not only has the word bishop displaced the word presbyter, as the familiar designation of the man holding the highest dignity and authority in the congregation, but the bishop has come to be recognized as occupying a position of exclusive privilege and power above that of the presbyters. This, however, in itself affected only the local church by way of strengthening the administration of the congregational organization and life. It did not bring about any essential change in the relation of congregation to congregation. It did not effect a general organization of the churches into one body with one visible head, though it helped much to prepare the way for that.

It is proper to add here that the development which resulted in the monarchical episcopate and in the distinction of rank between bishop and presbyter was a free and natural development. What is meant is not that this development met with no opposition, but that

it was not required by any prescriptive enactment of Christ, and that it resulted in the establishment of episcopacy as the recognized order of church government without formal legislative action by synod or council.

As time went on, the bishop²² of the capital of a province, because in some sense he stood *in loco parentis* to the churches in neighbouring cities, and because of his recognized ability and experience, first gave counsel to the other bishops of the province as they were willing to receive it, and then gradually acquired at least a quasi authority over them. Thus tradition relates that the church in Byzantium, the rival of Rome after Constantine removed the seat of empire to the former city and called it Constantinople, was, from its first establishment, about the beginning of the third century, a suffragan church subject to the authority of the metropolitan of Heraclea in Thrace.²³ At the second general Council of Constantinople (381 A. D.) the bishop of Constantinople was given first rank *after* the bishop of Rome, and at the Council of Chalcedon (451 A. D.) he was given equal rank. Thus also Jerusalem had been under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Cæsarea, until the Council of Chalcedon raised the bishop of Jerusalem to the rank of Patriarch and assigned all of Palestine and Arabia to his jurisdiction, Cæsarea thus becoming subordinate to Jerusalem.

²² Not formally designated Metropolitan until 325 A. D., but that in fact as early as 170 A. D.

²³ Catholic Encyclopedia, s. v. Constantinople.

In like manner, from an early time, the clergy, especially those in the West, deferred to the bishop of Rome, sought his counsel, and submitted to him their questions and difficulties, of whatever nature, for his consideration and opinion. This was welcomed on the part of the bishops of Rome, and they, too, in course of time, ceased to be mere advisers and learned to speak with the voice of authority and command.

Such extension of power on the part of the metropolitans brought the churches and bishops of a province into group relation. When Provincial Synods began to be held, from 170 A. D. onward, there followed a gradual consolidation of each provincial group under its metropolitan; but this did not bring the several metropolitans, or the groups under them, into one organic whole. The metropolitanates were not bound together under a single head, but were independent one of another. It is important to bear in mind, moreover, that the development into metropolitanates was free, in the sense that these were formed not by any divinely prescribed rule, or by any forceful imposition of authority, but with the consent or acquiescence of the provincial bishops and the readiness of the metropolitans. The provincials probably did not understand the full significance of their acquiescence.

What has been said covers in brief the progress of organization in the Church down to the time when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire (313 A. D.). It need only be added that the way had been preparing for the organization of the Church into Patriarchates by the preëminence which had been

more or less conceded to the churches which had been founded by apostles (*sedes apostolicæ*). Thus it was that, among all the metropolitans, those of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Ephesus and Corinth were of outstanding rank and got to themselves much power. When Constantine refashioned his empire, dividing it into four prefectures, and these into twelve dioceses, and the dioceses again into provinces, it was a comparatively simple matter to bring the arrangements for ecclesiastical jurisdiction into some semblance of agreement geographically with those for the administration of the empire. Accordingly at the Council of Nicæa (325 A. D.), the jurisdiction which Rome and Antioch had long exercised "according to old custom" was recognized, and Alexandria was given rank with them, and that for the same reason. In the sixth canon of that Council it is prescribed that the bishop of Alexandria, "in accordance with the old customs, shall have jurisdiction over Egypt, in Libya and Pentapolis, since it is also according to old custom for the bishop of Rome to have such jurisdiction, as also the churches in Antioch and in the other provinces."²⁴ To the occupants of these Sees there was given the distinguishing title of Patriarch, each one having jurisdiction over the regions assigned to him. This arrangement now had the force of law, since the decision of the Council received the confirmation of the Emperor. Later on, as noted above, Constantinople and Jerusalem were also elevated into Patriarchates. The bishop of Rome, however, declined a title which

²⁴ Kurtz's Church History.

would place him on an equality with other bishops, and chose instead the name Papa, Pope.

It is not necessary for our purpose to follow the matter of organization further, since, with the establishment of the Patriarchal constitution of the Church, the work of organization was practically complete and remains the same to this day, the title of metropolitan having been replaced in the Church of Rome by that of Archbishop.

It remains to note in what manner and how far organization within the Church, prior to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire affected the principle of Christian liberty. As we have seen, the development was free, as in the absence of any divine law prescribing the form of organization and government which the Church should take, it had the right to be. As a matter of fact the development was in the direction of the episcopate and the metropolitanate. If there seems to have been little opposition to this tendency it was doubtless because it could not be foreseen what claims the episcopate would later set up as over against the presbyterate and the congregation. An additional reason for the easy triumph of episcopacy lay in the fact that the people as well as the clergy were empire-minded in regard to the matter of organization and government. By this is meant that the Roman Empire furnished the outstanding example and universally recognized model of effective organization. This was true of both the civil and the military control. Nothing was more obvious than this. It entered into the very thinking of men;

and in seeking to secure order and respect for authority in the churches the early Christian writers were wont to cite the great example of diversified authority and subordination presented in the Empire. For example, Clement of Rome says in his Epistle to the Corinthians referred to above: "Let us then, men and brethren, with all energy act the part of soldiers in accordance with His holy commandments. Let us consider those who serve under our generals, with what order, obedience, and submissiveness they perform the things which are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, nor the like, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals."²⁵

The development in church organization might have been somewhat different, and probably would have been, if the conditions surrounding the Church in its infancy had continued. The first Christians were Jews, and were of course Jewish-minded, even in the matter of church organization. They very naturally thought of the synagogue as the model. Hence in Jerusalem and in the churches established by St. Paul the organization reflected that of the synagogue. In naming the officials of the churches *presbyters*, there was no departure from the old familiar term employed among the Jews. Now if the Church had remained Jewish, or if the Jews everywhere had accepted Christianity and had led in the building of the Church, this earliest form of organization in the congregations

²⁵ Chap. XXXVII.

would likely have persisted. The chief official would have been a presbyter with some such distinctive title as president of the board of elders. Wider organization, especially inasmuch as the Church in any case had to grow by the ingathering, government and discipline of an empire-minded folk, would doubtless have produced even within a presbyteral system an official corresponding to the metropolitan bishop. But in such a case also the development would have been free and unhampered, since it was never possible to adduce any word or act of the Lord which authoritatively prescribed the form of organization willed by Him to His Church or the names by which its officials should be called.

However, Christ did speak to His disciples warning them not to be like those who "love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market-places, and to be called of men, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven. Neither be ye called master: for one is your master, even the Christ."²⁶ As long as this spirit should characterize His followers and those who should bear office among them, there could be no inherent conflict between any form of government they might choose and the principle of Christian liberty, whether the form be that of government by a body of presbyters, or by a single person bearing the title of "bishop" or "presbyter." All depends upon

²⁶ Matt. 23: 6-10.

the question whether the officials themselves know and prove the liberty which Christ bestows upon those who truly believe in Him and His holy Gospel—the liberty, namely, which sets a man free, not only from sin and the law, but also from enslavement to the ego and from all of its selfish impulses and ambitions.

There were, indeed, instances enough in the early Church in which authority clashed with authority; but it was never the fault of a system of government but always of the men who stood at or near the head. The trouble was usually between bishops, or between bishops and presbyters. For example, there was the controversy between Rome and the churches of Asia Minor with regard to the date of observing Easter. In 155 A. D. Polycarp visited Rome and there discussed the subject with Anicetus. They came to no agreement, but communion between the East and the West was not at this time broken off. Later, in 196, Victor, bishop of Rome, went so far as to excommunicate those of Asia Minor on the sole ground of this traditional difference, a procedure which was condemned very generally, and which Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, severely rebuked.

In the year 217 A. D., Callistus, a man of checkered and not altogether savoury life, succeeded in having himself chosen as bishop of Rome. A strong opposition developed on the part of those who stood for strict discipline in the Church. They accused Callistus of laxity in this matter; also of heresy in regard to the person of Christ. At the head of this party was the celebrated presbyter Hippolytus, who became the

leader of a schismatic sect and was elected bishop in opposition to Callistus. This schism lasted until the year 235 A. D.

Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus, a man of considerable wealth, and of high social standing in Carthage, was, in the year 248 A. D., by a popular and somewhat tumultuous movement, elected bishop in that city. Five presbyters, Novatus being their leader, opposed his election, and began their movement against him by the election of Felicissimus, a wealthy and influential layman, as deacon. Later they chose Fortunatus, one of their own number, as bishop in opposition to Cyprian. There is reason to believe that one of the objections which they urged against Cyprian was that he, very soon after his conversion to Christianity, had been raised to the presbyterate and that within three years thereafter he had been made bishop in disregard of St. Paul's admonition that a bishop must be "not a novice."²⁷ They also charged him with weakness and unfaithfulness to duty because, in the Decian persecution which shortly followed his elevation to the episcopate, he withdrew from Carthage and lived in concealment for a period of eighteen months. Further, they sought to justify their opposition on the ground of his strictness in dealing with the *lapsi*, insisting as he did that it was the right of the bishop alone to restore the fallen.²⁸

In 251 A. D., after a vacancy of more than a year, the bishopric in the church at Rome had been filled by the

²⁷ Select Epistles of St. Cyprian by T. A. Lacey, Introduction, p. xi.

²⁸ *Ib.*, p. xvii f.

election of Cornelius who seems to have favoured receiving the lapsed back into the communion of the Church on the easier terms. Immediately the party in Rome which stood for the stricter practice elected Novatian, the unsuccessful rival of Cornelius, as bishop in place of the latter. This party went so far as even to deny the competency of the Church to forgive and restore those who broke their baptismal vows by grievous sin. This party called themselves *οἱ καθαροί*, The Pure. They were "rigidly orthodox and rigidly puritanical."²⁹ The schism spread to almost all parts of the empire, and did not disappear entirely until the middle of the sixth century.

Nearly the whole of Egypt was carried away by a schism which broke out there in 306 A. D. This originated in the assumption by Meletius, bishop of Lycopolis in the Thebaid, of the right of conferring ordinations, which Peter, bishop of Alexandria, regarded as an infringement of his rights as metropolitan of Egypt. When admonitions proved fruitless, Peter called a synod which excommunicated the offending bishop of Lycopolis. The result of this action was the schism which attained very large proportions and lasted until the Council of Nicæa (325 A. D.), backed now by imperial authority, prescribed that the bishop of Alexandria³⁰ should have jurisdiction over Egypt and other regions adjacent thereto.

Thus there were schisms all around the compass and in the heart of Rome itself; and what is to be particu-

²⁹ "The Confusion of the Churches," by K. D. Mackenzie, p. 28.

³⁰ The See was now filled by Alexander.

larly noted is that not one of them implied a protest against the prevalent system of church government. The fact is that in every case the schismatics set up the same form of episcopal government as that of the "catholic" churches. If there were not bishops among them at the beginning they elected bishops for themselves; and usually they took care that their consecration should be at least in due form at the hands of three bishops.

We conclude from this study that, if there was any just conception of Christian liberty among the independent thinkers of the Church, they did not see in the form of organization, considered in itself alone, anything that was inherently inconsistent with such liberty. It is not the form of organization and government that matters; that which makes any form whatsoever consonant with the idea of Christian liberty is the abiding, overflowing presence within it of the spirit of Christ and the absence from it of all claims, assumptions, restrictions, impositions and interpositions which would interfere with the soul's immediate access to God in Christ, or deprive it of the pure air and radiant sunshine of liberty.

We conclude further, that there is no one particular form of organization that must be regarded as necessary in the sense that there can be no church without it, or that without it the channels of grace and salvation are uncertain and unreliable. Any system that sets up such a claim for itself is in conflict with the liberty which Christ came to give to men. Christian liberty concedes the right of any form of organization

for the Church, but rejects the necessity of any one to the exclusion of others. It brings together all forms on a basis of equal validity in one great communion; as is exemplified in the Lutheran Church, which in some countries is episcopal, in others presbyteral, but all bound together by a common faith and confession and rejoicing in a common salvation. The charter of this liberty is contained in the seventh article of the Augsburg Confession equally prized and courageously defended by all:

“Also they teach, that One holy Church is to continue for ever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: ‘One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,’ etc. (Eph. 4: 5, 6).”

Accordingly the Reformers, when they were denied episcopal ordination, fell back with full confidence upon the original right of the Church to a free development; and while they did not reject ordination but retained it as a useful rite, it was administered at the hands of presbyters, who possessed all the just powers of the bishop.

XI

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND PRIESTHOOD

IN the preceding chapter we have regarded episcopacy simply as a form of church organization and government. At first it was purely local, and the bishop differed only in name from the presbyter. St. Paul uses the two terms as practically synonymous, referring to the same office and to the same persons; though in his later years, at the close of his third missionary tour¹ and in his epistles to the Philippians, to Timothy and Titus, he seems to lean to the use of the word "bishop."² If this was true it would indicate that even in his day the transition had set in which, in less than a century after his death, resulted in the universal use of the title of bishop for the chief official in the congregation.

As the Church became more and more Gentile in its membership Jewish ideas and forms lost hold upon it, and the Greco-Roman mind showed itself in forms reflecting that civilization. Thus "*episcopos*," an official title familiar in certain Greek societies, comes forward; and while the *presbyter* does not disappear he tends to be distinguished from the *episcopos* and to take a distinctly lower function and rank. We have

¹ Acts 20: 28.

² Phil. 1: 1; I Tim. 3: 1, 2; Tit. 1: 7 (assuming the genuineness of the Pastoral epistles).

found however, that in this change of names and in the system of government which came with it there was involved no inherent conflict with the idea of Christian liberty, as there need not have been if the final organization had taken a different form.

But now we must look at episcopacy not solely as a form of government, as at first it appears to us, but with all of its later connotations. The meaning of it has grown by accretion until it is difficult to think of it as it was understood at the beginning. The term has stood for many hundreds of years not for a mere system of government but for a divinely established order of grace and salvation essential to the very existence of the Church and in subjection to which alone one can be assured of the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. It must be stated here, once for all and to be borne in mind throughout this discussion, that episcopacy is not even to-day understood in one and the same way by all who are commonly classified as episcopal, and that what has just been said of episcopacy would be quite contrary to fact if the statement were meant to be inclusive of all who to-day live under an episcopal form of government. It is well known that the great Anglican Communion, including the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, is not a unit in regard to the doctrine about its ministry, though it is a unit in that the episcopal system of government is universally accepted. There are many among them, the Anglo-Catholics, who would not only not object to our statement as given above but rather would freely assent to it; on the other hand, there are many, among

them distinguished bishops and learned writers, to whom our statement does not apply and by whom it would be rejected. The Bishop of Gloucester, for example, while arguing in favour of episcopacy and episcopal ordination as the right and proper custom of the Church of England, says: "But it is one thing to say that a custom is right, another thing to say that it is essential for a valid order and valid sacraments, and I do not think that there are any historical grounds which will justify us in saying that."³ Speaking of the ministries of non-episcopal Churches he says: "We may quite rightly from our point of view, speak of all these ministries and sacraments as irregular, but to call them invalid or destitute of spiritual reality we have no justification."⁴

Turning now to the Lutheran Churches of the Continent of Europe,—some of which have always been episcopal, others not,—we may say that episcopacy is no more regarded as essential to the being of the Church by the former than by the latter. The late Archbishop Söderblom of the Church of Sweden may be permitted to speak for those whose system is episcopal. In his book on *Christian Fellowship*⁵ he quotes himself as having said at the Swedish-English Church Conference in Upsala, 1909: "We look upon our Church's special forms and traditions, not only with a pious regard which is due to an honourable heritage from our forbears, but as an endowment, en-

³ "The Church of England," by the Rt. Rev. Arthur C. Headlam (1925), p. 114.

⁴ Op. cit. p. 115.

⁵ P. 126.

trusted to us by the God of history." To this he adds: "And there is in our section of the Church no room for the slightest doubt about the unbroken continuity of what has been called apostolic succession." He insists, however, that "a difference must be made here between what is precious to us but not essential and what is essential, in other words, between that which belongs to God's other good gifts and the one thing needful;"⁶ and he argues that the frontier is not "between the episcopal portion of Christendom and religious communions without any episcopal constitution;" but that "the real frontier is within the episcopal part of the Church between those who consider a certain external order, here the episcopal office, necessary for the true congregation of Christ and for the unity of the Church, and those who do not."⁷ And let it be noted here that Archbishop Söderblom's position is not individualistic or particularistic, but that it is in full accord with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially with the seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession⁸ from which he quotes,⁹ and which we have given in full at the end of the preceding chapter. From his position no confessional Lutheran can withhold assent.

It is the doctrine of priesthood, as held by those in episcopal churches who regard the *bishop* and the *presbyter* as *sacerdotes*, or indispensable intermediaries between God and His people, that is "the very head

⁶ Op. cit. p. 135.

⁷ Op. cit. p. 134.

⁸ and ⁹ Op. cit. p. 132. By somebody's error, perhaps the translator's, he is made to say, "Augustine in his *Confessions* says," which should be, The Augsburg Confession says.

and front " of the offending against Christian liberty. Almost everything else that is irreconcilable with this freedom centers around or in one way or another attaches to this one doctrine.

The doctrine of priesthood as pertaining in a special sense to the *ministry* of the Church certainly is not found anywhere in the New Testament. The apostles did not know it, or if they did they made no mention of it in their writings. The ministers as such are never called *priests* (ἱερεῖς),—the word which is used in speaking of the members of the Old Testament priesthood. Once in speaking of his own ministry St. Paul uses a word (ἱεργεύω)¹⁰ which might be supposed to imply that he at least thought of himself as a priest; but the passage shows clearly that he was not using the language of literalism, but that he was speaking in a bold figure. He was "ministering"¹¹ the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable." The Eucharist was far from his thought and every other function ordinarily belonging specially to the priesthood. Nothing can be found in the New Testament which remotely suggests the continuance of a priesthood analogous to that of the Old Testament. Christ never spoke of it. He neither did nor said anything at the institution of the Lord's Supper that faintly hints at it. He "took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same

¹⁰ Rom. 15: 16.

¹¹ Greek, *ministering in sacrifice*. See R. V., Margin.

manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." There was thanksgiving; there was the giving and the receiving, the eating and the drinking. And the words which were to guide them in their action in future observances of the Lord's Supper were simply, "Do this." St. Paul's understanding of the action in the Lord's Supper is briefly stated in the following words: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."¹² We fail to find anywhere in the teaching of Christ or of the apostles any suggestion of the need of a human priesthood. Quite to the contrary the institution is expressly done away with since we are taught to look unto "Jesus the Son of God" as "the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession,"¹³ and through Him to "draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."¹⁴ "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."¹⁵ And St. Peter, writing to the believers "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia," teaches them that the relation which they sustain to Christ is that of a "holy" and "royal priesthood,"¹⁶ which is one both of high privilege and weighty responsibility.

¹² I Cor. 11: 26.¹³ Heb. 3: 1 and 4: 14.¹⁴ Heb. 4: 16.¹⁵ I Tim. 2: 5.¹⁶ I Peter 2: 4-9.

In view of all these things there can be no place for an order of priests between Christ and His believing people. All are priests. Well may we desire and seek the prayers of other Christians, those who are ministers of the Church and those who are not; but that there should be now a special order of priests "in things pertaining to God" whose intervention is necessary in order that we may receive mercy and find grace seems wholly inconsistent with the rich and glorious provision of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. His office as Mediator and High Priest is not thereby exalted and glorified, but it is depreciated; and by such special Order we ourselves are in danger of undervaluing the precious gift which our Lord bestowed upon us when He "made us kings and priests unto God and his Father."¹⁷ It tends to take away that freedom of approach to God which Jesus intended that we should have, to weaken confidence in our own privilege as priests and to place it where, by every consideration of Scripture teaching and of spiritual growth, it ought not to be.

Not only are the apostles and ministers never called priests in the New Testament, but none of the functions of the priest is assigned to them exclusively. It is made no part of their special duty to offer sacrifice. Neither they nor the first generation or two of Christians after them, so far as we can learn, knew anything about sacrificial worship in the then commonly accepted sense of the word. That which in the second century was spoken of as a "sacrifice" is called in the

¹⁷ Rev. 1: 6.

New Testament "the Lord's Supper."¹⁸ In the Gospels and Epistles the words "oblation" and "offering" are never used in reference to it. It has not even received the name of Eucharist. The kinds of sacrifice that are commended in the New Testament as acceptable to God may be learned from the following passages. It may be pointed out that none of these sacrifices can be offered for one person by another. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service."¹⁹ "Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all."²⁰ "I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."²¹ "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."²² "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."²³

Thus we see that the New Testament lends no support to the idea of priesthood other than that of Christ as the great High Priest and that which pertains to all believers alike as priests who may with confidence draw near to the throne of grace. We see also that the only sacrifices which are recognized in the New

¹⁸ I Cor. 11: 20.

²¹ Phil. 4: 18.

¹⁹ Rom. 12: 1.

²² Heb. 13: 15, 16.

²⁰ Phil. 2: 17.

²³ I Peter 2: 5.

Testament are those of a spiritual kind,—those of the heart, the mind and the soul,—sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, of faith and confidence trusting Him for all things, offerings of love and devotion to God and His children of mankind, even to the presenting of body, life and all to Him; and this, as an expression of thanksgiving and not at all as a propitiation for sins or as a consideration availing with God to procure for us the bestowal of His grace. This was recognized by the Fathers, as we may learn from Irenæus who cites the words of Psalm 50: 14, 15: “Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And pay thy vows unto the Most High; And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;” and he comments thus upon these words, “rejecting, indeed, those things by which sinners imagined they could propitiate God, and showing that He does Himself stand in need of nothing.”²⁴

Nothing could be clearer than that the New Testament is not a law book; above all, it is a grace book. Throughout it represents a strong movement away from all priesthood and sacrifices of the ancient type, or such as are of the spirit of the law, and, indeed, from all legalism. Christ Himself began this movement. He was acting in the spirit of it when He said to the Pharisees, who found fault with His disciples because when they were hungry they plucked the ears and did eat: “If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.”²⁵ The movement won the

²⁴ Against Heresies, Bk. IV, Chap. XVII.

²⁵ Matt. 12: 7.

strong support of Peter and John, and especially of Paul; and for a generation at least it was the preaching of the Word that engaged the time and the energies of the Church, conferred the spirit, and moved the world.

What was it, then, that checked this movement and at the same time gave the impulse to a return, at least in form, to the old ideas of priesthood and sacrifice, and to a legalistic spirit and conception of life in general? In a word, it was the psychology of the time. Both the Jews and the Gentiles of every nation were, by heredity and culture, so steeped in the ideas of priesthood and sacrifice that it was next to impossible for them to conceive of a religion without these as essentials. It was a common practice to deride Christianity by characterizing it as a religion without temples, altars or sacrifices. The Christians were accused even of atheism on account of this. It is difficult for us to estimate the effect of this on the popular mind, or the influence it would exert even upon the ministry, especially upon those of a compromising temper, in the direction of such adjustment as would weaken the force of this ridicule and make Christianity more attractive to the masses.

As for the Gentiles they were not only used to the white-robed priests, and shrines and reeking sacrifices, and all the articles of human manufacture required in their idolatrous rites; but the systems of worship to which they were devoted gave employment to the handicraftsmen and others whose services were in demand, and thus provided a source of livelihood and

wealth to many. This worship had its economic aspect and values, which were by no means insignificant. To preach and practise a religion according to which an unseen God was worshipped in spirit, and in which a priestly caste and ritualistic sacrifices had no place, not only seemed to be an empty superstition but it struck at the economic interests of many people. Hence Christianity could expect nothing but opposition at the hands of an idolatrous world. St. Paul witnessed the fierceness of such opposition at Ephesus.²⁶

But doubtless the psychology of the Christian Church had more to do with producing and sanctioning the trend toward priesthood and sacrifice than anything else. For some time the only Scriptures that the Church possessed were those of the Old Testament in the Septuagint version. And for many years more there were but few of the churches which possessed a complete collection of the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. The Old Testament was read in all the churches and was diligently studied by the Fathers, as is shown by their frequent references to it and by the numerous and extended quotations which occur in their writings. This familiarity with the ancient Scriptures entered largely into their religious psychology.

Now in the worship of the Old Testament Church priesthood and sacrifice were the outstanding and essential elements. And although they read and understood how God had shown by His prophets that He was weary of sacrifice, and that in His eyes, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth

²⁶ Acts 19: 23ff.

a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol"—²⁷ although they understood all this and frequently quoted such passages, they had in the Old Testament all the background they needed for a priestly and sacrificial worship, especially since they failed fully to appreciate the fact that all of those types and shadows had been fulfilled in Christ and had been abrogated forevermore.

They began the process of falling back into Old Testament ideas and forms when they reserved the name Eucharist for the Lord's Supper. The first such use of this word in Christian literature is that which we find in the *Didache*,²⁸ The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (c. 90 A. D.). The use had already become familiar and required no explanation. From what is said about it there, it would seem that, besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing was the *thanksgiving*. At the institution of the Supper Jesus had *given thanks* in connection with both the bread and the cup; and to express this act St. Luke²⁹ uses the Greek word *eucharistesas* (εὐχαριστήσας). The mind of the early Church took hold of this picturesque word, expressing, indeed, only a part of the action in the Lord's Supper, and used it as the name of the whole, calling it the Eucharist (Εὐχαριστία). The *thanksgiving* was truly a spiritual sacrifice and as such is always offered by believers, and by the whole church or congregation, in connection with the Lord's Supper. But

²⁷ Isa. 66: 3.

²⁸ Secs. IX, X.

²⁹ Luke 22: 17, 19; SS. Matthew and Mark use it of the cup only.

as early as the date of the *Didache* they were thinking and speaking not only of the *thanksgiving*, but of the entire action in the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist), as a sacrifice.³⁰ From that time onward we get used to the word Eucharist, and also to such expressions as to "offer the gifts," "the oblation," "the sacrifice." We find the language special to sacrifice in almost every writing of importance from the *Didache* onward. We meet with it in Clement of Rome (96 A. D.), in The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 100 A. D.), in Ignatius (c. 115 A. D.), in the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 120 A. D.), in Justin Martyr (c. 155 A. D.) and in Irenæus (c. 185 A. D.). A careful study of all these together points to one conclusion; namely, that through all this period of time the conception of sacrifice in connection with the Lord's Supper was forming rather than formed. In some of these writers, as in The Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas, it is impossible to find evidence that they thought of the Lord's Supper as involving in any sense the element of sacrifice.

Barnabas, in the second chapter of his epistle, the subject of which is, *The Jewish Sacrifices Are Now Abolished*, says:

"Since, therefore, the days are evil, and Satan possesses the power of this world, we ought to give heed to ourselves, and diligently inquire into the ordinances of the Lord. . . . For He hath revealed to us by all the prophets that He needs neither sacrifices, nor burnt-offerings, nor oblations, saying thus, 'What is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of burnt-offerings,

³⁰ See Sec. XIV.

and desire not the fat of lambs, and the blood of bulls and goats. . . . Tread no more My courts, not though ye bring with you fine flour. Incense is a vain abomination unto Me, and your new moons and sabbaths I cannot endure.' ³¹ He has therefore abolished these things, that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human oblation." ³²

He then goes on to say:

"We ought, therefore, being possessed of understanding, to perceive the gracious intention of our Father; for He speaks to us, desirous that we, not going astray like them, should ask how we may approach Him. To us, then He declares, 'A sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit; a smell of sweet savour to the Lord is a heart that glorifieth Him that made it.' We ought, therefore, brethren, carefully to inquire concerning our salvation, lest the wicked one, having made his entrance by deceit, should hurl us forth from our true life."

Though Barnabas does not here, or elsewhere, speak of the Eucharist, we can hardly fail to catch in these words of his an echo of protest against a tendency already showing itself to worship God by sacrifices other than those of the heart.

Hermas says so little about sacrifice that it is impossible, when he uses the word or its equivalents, to infer whether he ever heard of "the Eucharist" or not. The Shepherd tells him that the rich man, "*offers* very few confessions and intercessions to the Lord, and those

³¹ Isa. 1: 11-14, from the Septuagint.

³² The edition from which this is quoted has the following footnote: "Thus in the Latin. The Greek reads, 'might not have a man-made oblation.' The Latin text seems preferable, implying that, instead of the outward sacrifice of the law, there is now required a dedication of *man himself*."

which he does *offer* are small and weak.”³³ He also tells him the kind of fast he should *offer* to God, and says: “If you observe fasting, as I have commanded you, your sacrifice will be acceptable to God.”³⁴

Clement of Rome has more bearing upon this subject. He says, speaking of Jacob as the context shows: “From him have sprung the priests and all the Levites who minister at the altar of God.”³⁵ He says that God

“Has enjoined offerings to be presented and service to be performed to Him, and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done, He himself has fixed by His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure, may be acceptable unto Him. Those, therefore, who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed; for inasmuch as they follow the laws of the Lord, they sin not. For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high-priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen.”³⁶

It is evident that in this passage Clement uses the historical present, the direct reference being to Old Testament arrangements; yet he as evidently adduces the Old Testament priesthood, with its services and offerings, as an argument for obedience to the ministry as established in his day; and when he speaks of “offerings to be presented” he doubtless has in mind also the Eucharist and conceives of it as a sacrifice.

³³ Similitude Second.

³⁴ Similitude Fifth, Chap. III.

³⁵ I Epistle to the Corinthians, Chap. XXXII.

³⁶ I Epistle to the Corinthians, Chap. XL.

A little further on in the same epistle he gives this admonition: "Our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties."³⁷ Instead of "fulfilled its duties" the literal translation would be "presented the offerings." It is not evident from a study of Clement's words in what sense he regarded the Eucharist as a sacrifice, or what meaning he attached to the priesthood of the New Testament ministry.

Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Smyrnæans, inveighs against the Docetæ who "abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer,"³⁸ because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ."³⁹ In his Epistle to the Philadelphians he exhorts them to take heed "to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to show forth the unity of His blood; one altar."⁴⁰ The *thanksgiving* implied in the word Eucharist may have been the only kind of sacrifice of which Ignatius thought; and the "altar" may have meant nothing more than the table or piece of furniture at which the sacrifice of thanksgiving was celebrated. The Lutherans also have altars in their churches; but it is quite definitely understood that the minister offers no sacrifice, except that, as leader of the people, he with them and they with him offer the sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. In the sacrament itself they do not give, but receive.

³⁷ Chap. XLIV.

³⁸ Theodoret's reading, *προσφοράς*, "offerings," would seem to be more suitable.

³⁹ Chap. VII. See also Chap. VIII.

⁴⁰ Chap. IV.

Justin Martyr has much more to say about the Eucharist than any of the writers who preceded him. To him we are indebted for an extended account of the manner of celebrating it in the middle of the second century. He introduces us into one of their assemblies when they bring one who has recently been baptized "to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled." Then they pray earnestly for themselves, and for the baptized, and for all others in every place. He continues:—

"Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying, Amen." ⁴¹

Then those present "partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced." A portion is also sent to the absent ones. Justin goes on to say that "this food is called among us *Εὐχαριστία*"; and he tells us what he understands it to be:—

"Not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word,

⁴¹ "The First Apology of Justin Martyr," Chap. LXV.

and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread and when He had given thanks, said, 'This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;' and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, 'This is My blood.' " ⁴²

In another place the same writer speaks of "the Eucharist of the bread and the cup" as a sacrifice "which Jesus the Christ enjoined us to offer," but in the immediate connection says:—

"Now, that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit." ⁴³

Evidently he did not regard the bread and the wine (the body and the blood of Christ) as a sacrifice, but only *the thanksgiving* from which the whole Supper received its name of the Eucharist. It is very interesting to note how readily and almost unconsciously the thoughts of the early writers passed from the thanksgiving (*Εὐχαριστία*) to the whole action in the Lord's Supper, and again from the latter back to the former, as though there were no distinction to be made between the part and the whole.

We have reserved to the last the testimony of Irenæus, because that, while he uses the language of sacrifice, he seems to us to have come nearer to

⁴² "The First Apology of Justin Martyr," Chap. LXVI.

⁴³ "Dialogue with Trypho," Chap. CXVII.

expressing the true conception of the liberty of the New Testament than any of those early writers. Speaking of the laws which Moses had promulgated to the people he calls them "the laws of bondage," and declares that "These things, therefore, which were given for bondage, and for a sign to them, He cancelled by the new covenant of liberty."⁴⁴ In the same book, bearing in mind that God's ancient people Israel were commanded to offer unto Him of the first-fruits of the field and of their vintage, he speaks thus of Christ's institution of His Supper:—

"Giving directions to His disciples to offer to God the first-fruits of His own created things—not as if He stood in need of them, but that they might be themselves neither unfruitful nor ungrateful—He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks and said, 'This is My body.' And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His blood, and taught the new oblation of the new covenant; which the Church receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout all the world."⁴⁵

And he quotes the words of Malachi (Ch. 1: 11) as foretelling "the oblation of the new covenant":—

"From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, My name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to My name, and a pure sacrifice."

He comments thus:

"Now John, in the Apocalypse, declares that the 'incense' is 'the prayers of the saints.'"

⁴⁴ "Against Heresies," Book IV, Chap. XVI, 5.

⁴⁵ *Ib.*, Book IV, Chap. XVII, 5, 6.

Speaking still of the oblation "which the Lord gave instruction to be offered throughout all the world," he proceeds as follows:—

"The class of oblations in general has not been set aside; for there were oblations there (among the Jews), and there are oblations here (among the Christians). Sacrifices there were among the people; sacrifices there are, too, in the Church; but the species alone has been changed, inasmuch as the offering is now made, not by slaves, but by freemen. For the Lord is (ever) the same; but the character of a servile oblation is peculiar (to itself), as is also that of freemen, in order that by the very oblations, the indication of liberty may be set forth."⁴⁶

Irenæus says much more about the Eucharist, in all of which he shows with unmistakable clearness that the only sacrifice of which he thinks in connection with the Eucharist is the sacrifice of a thankful, trusting, loving heart and an obedient spirit.

We have made these somewhat lengthy citations in order that the reader might judge for himself as to how the Fathers, who lived and wrote in the first and second centuries of the Church's history, conceived of Christian sacrifice acceptable to God. The following conclusions seem to be unquestionable. First, that all of them were of one mind in the judgment that the offering of one's self to God wholly and unreservedly was a sacrifice well-pleasing to Him; and that this involved a heart broken and contrite on account of its sin, confessing transgression and iniquity, trusting in Christ and by faith receiving forgiveness, praying to

⁴⁶ "Against Heresies," Book IV, Chap. XVIII, 1, 2.

God in all confidence and giving thanks to His name, serving Him in love, abandoning hatred and every evil purpose, and doing the deeds of love to all men. For such sacrifices no intermediary priest is necessary, indeed, one cannot act for another in these things. Secondly, that two of the earliest writers did not refer to the Eucharist at all as a sacrifice. Thirdly, that all the rest of them conceived of the Eucharist as in some sense a sacrifice. Fourthly, that the idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice was in process of forming but only in the early stages. And fifthly, that with the development of the idea of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the conception of the ministry of the church as a priesthood grew *pari passu*, if, indeed, it did not out-speed the other.

We have seen that the ideas of sacrifice and priesthood as they have developed from a somewhat obscure beginning did not originate with Christ or His apostles. There is nothing to suggest or warrant them in the New Testament. They seem to be most readily and reasonably accounted for by the psychology of the times, both Jewish and pagan.

If a question should be raised about absolution, our answer is that there is nothing in the New Testament to show that the power of absolution was granted exclusively to the apostles or to any priestly order; but that, on the contrary, it is a power which belongs to the entire Church, as is clear from the words of Christ:—

“And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his

fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church."

Absolution is not the prerogative of any order of priests. But just as it is meet and right that the people should hear the Gospel and receive the sacraments at the hands of the duly appointed minister, so it is right and profitable that they should seek absolution from him.

Christian liberty can be maintained only if the truth remains sure and unclouded, that there is one High Priest, Christ Jesus, who has ascended to the right hand of God, that there is but one sacrifice once offered upon the cross for the sins of the whole world, and that all believers have been admitted to an inalienable priesthood.

No sacrifice or priesthood other than these can ever be acknowledged as necessary by such as know and rejoice in the liberty which Christ gives to those who come with nothing but their sin and their faith in Him, who approach humbly yet confidently at the appeal of His "Come," saying:

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.*

And however deep and strong their desire for unity, no episcopacy, and especially an episcopacy which involves in any sense these elements of sacrifice and priesthood, can hope to be received as necessary by

those catholic Christians who accept and hold fast the full freedom which is Christ's gift to faith alone. If episcopacy can ever succeed in ridding itself of these unevangelical accretions, then that great body of conservative Protestants which has consistently stood with Paul for the defense of the principle of Christian liberty can hopefully treat with Episcopalians on the subject of Church Order, or government.

XII

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CATHOLICITY

THE mind reacts to the word "Catholicity" in much the same way that it does to Einstein's "relativity." First it wonders what it means; then it tries for a time, with little thought of success, to gain some definite and catholic conception of the thing; and then finally it gives up the effort, with a feeling that it doesn't make much difference anyway. This is but another way of saying that the subject of Catholicity is enshrouded in much obscurity; and that since there are several different opinions about it which are exclusive of one another, and each of which is stoutly defended by a constituency respectable for its proportions and scholarship, there is little hope of reaching by purely mental processes an intelligible and universally satisfactory definition of the term. No other test of catholicity fares much better in applica-

tion than the famous but little regarded rule of St. Vincent of Lerins (ob. c. 450 A. D.): "*Id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.*"

Those who first spoke of the Church as "Catholic" seem not to have understood quite clearly what they meant by the description; at least, they did not undertake to define it.

St. Ignatius is accredited with the first recorded use of the words, "the Catholic Church," in his Epistle to the Smyrnæans, where he says: "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."¹ Nowhere does he say what he means by the word catholic. We must infer, therefore, either that he uses it in the primary and generally accepted sense of "universal," or that he employs it with a new, more pregnant and technical meaning which it had already acquired in the Church, and which was so generally known and understood as to require no further definition. In another place he utters words which are difficult to harmonize with those just quoted. In his Epistle to the Trallians he urges upon all that they "reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles;" and he adds:—"Apart from these, there is no Church."² Elsewhere in the same epistle, he tells them that they are "subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ."³ Putting his several statements together, Ignatius would seem to have held that wher-

¹ Chap. VIII.

² Chap. III.

³ Chap. II.

ever Jesus Christ *and the bishop* are, there is the Catholic Church, and that where the bishop, presbyters and deacons are not Christ is not and the Church is not.

Clement of Rome spoke of "the whole church";⁴ but it is evident that in the place referred to he had in mind only a local church or congregation.

St. Cyprian's theory of the Catholic Church must be gathered from his treatise, *De Catholicæ Ecclesiæ Unitate*, and from his letters. It is inseparably inwrought with his doctrine of the episcopate. With him the emphasis was not so much upon the idea of catholicity as it was upon that of unity, for which he had a devotion amounting almost to a passion. With regard to the local church he held that "the bishop is in the church, and the church in the bishop," *ecclesia est in episcopo*. He placed the unity of the whole church also in the episcopate, which according to him Christ first committed to Peter (Matt. 16: 18, 19); and then after His resurrection He gave "an equal power" to all of the apostles (John 20: 21). "Yet that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity as beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity."⁵ "The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole."⁶ All bishops were equal in authority. Cyprian did not hesitate, in a

⁴ Ep. to the Corinthians, Chap. XLIV. See quotation on page 146.

⁵ *De Catholicæ Ecclesiæ Unitate*, 4.

⁶ *Ib.*, 5.

letter to Cornelius, bishop of Rome, to express resentment at the idea that "the bishops in Africa have less authority than elsewhere."⁷ How the catholicity of the Church was secured may be inferred from the following statement: "The catholic church is one and cannot be divided, but is connected together by the cement of her bishops closely and intimately adhering to each other."⁸ Each bishop was responsible to God only. This was a settled opinion with Cyprian from the beginning. In a letter written early in the year 252, in which he speaks of a former division of opinion among the bishops of his province concerning the treatment of those guilty of flagitious practices, he says that those bishops who favoured the more rigorous discipline did not break the unity of the Church by withdrawing from the communion of those who were more lenient, and justifies both sides in this way: "Each bishop, maintaining the bonds of unity without a breach in them, hath indeed a right to regulate his own administration by prudential measures, and is accountable to our Lord for such his conduct."⁹ About four years later, in the spring of 256, Cyprian, who was intensely opposed to the recognition of the validity of heretical baptism, wrote to Stephen I, bishop of Rome, an upholder of the contrary opinion. In this letter he communicates the decision of a synod held by himself and his colleagues in Africa, "that they who have been dipped out of the church and defiled among heretics and schismatics with the pollution of impure water, when they return to us and to the church which is but

⁷ Ep. LIX, 10.⁸ Ep. LXVI, 6.⁹ Ep. LV, 12.

one, should be baptized.”¹⁰ He reports also another decision of the same synod regarding presbyters and deacons who have revolted from the church and wish to return to it; the decision was “that these, one and all, should be received, when they return to us, upon the condition of lay-communion only.” He concludes by saying that he and his colleagues were agreed in the opinion, “to obtrude nothing upon any one, nor to prescribe any law; since every bishop, in the government of the church committed to him, hath discretionary powers, and is accountable to God only for the use of them.”¹¹ Stephen evidently was not of the same opinion, for soon thereafter he excommunicated Cyprian and the other bishops with him. It is interesting and in order here to note that this same Stephen was the first to claim that the Pope succeeds to the Chair of Peter, and the first also to assert universal authority for the Pope by excommunicating at the same time all who did not follow the Roman practice in acknowledging the validity of heretical baptism. Cyprian himself would not excommunicate other bishops. He was determined not to break with those even “who had taken upon them the patronage of heretics,” and says that he has no intention of prescribing to any person, “or so to prejudice the cause as to hinder any bishop from acting herein according to his own judgment, as having full power to do what he pleaseth.”¹² Thus he would preserve the unity and catholicity of the church by maintaining unbroken the unity of the college of bishops, each of whom possesses in full the authority

¹⁰ Ep. LXXII, 1.¹¹ Ep. LXXII, 2.¹² Ep. LXXIII, 8, 14.

of the episcopate. To him unity in the faith and uniformity in discipline were matters of secondary importance.

It is unnecessary for our purpose to trace further the development of the doctrine of catholicity. It struggled toward a more definite statement through the centuries until the Reformation. Then it was subjected to a new and most searching study in the light of the evangelic principle which was then brought forward and which took possession of the minds which were in quest of the freedom which Christ came to give. Suffice it to say that from the beginnings which have been noted have sprung the widely diverging views which are held by different groups of Christians in our day. Every one of the larger and more important of these groups insists either that it is the catholic church, as for example the Roman and the Greek Catholic, or that it is of it; and what they claim for themselves in theory, each one also would fain see come to pass in fact. This common aspiration is shown by the missionary spirit and the efforts at expansion which they all make. It is manifested also in world-wide organizations effected by the different family groups; such as The Lambeth Conference, The Lutheran World Convention, The Alliance of Reformed Churches Throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System, The Baptist World Alliance, The Ecumenical Methodist Conference, The International Congregational Council. A still wider view of catholicity has shown itself on the part of those who have participated in such movements as The Universal Conference on

Life and Work (Stockholm, 1925) and The World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927). No single group of Christians, unless it can show demonstrably that its definition is right to the exclusion of all others, can have an exclusive claim to the use of the name catholic.

The views which the different groups hold about catholicity vary in regard to the measure of inclusiveness or exclusiveness which they severally set for themselves; ranging all the way from those who acknowledge as belonging to the Church catholic all who believe in the one Lord Jesus Christ to those who exclude every one who does not profess obedience to the Roman pontiff, which means the acceptance of his primacy, not only of honour, but also of jurisdiction, and, since 1870, his infallible teaching authority.¹³ Between these two are the Eastern Orthodox, commonly known as the Greek Catholic, and those of the Anglican Communion who lay great stress upon the idea of catholicity, and who are known as Anglo-Catholics. Both of these, as well as the Church of Rome, regard the episcopate, with its three orders of deacon, priest and bishop, as having been instituted by Christ and transmitted by means of what is called an apostolic succession. The episcopate is a sacrificing priesthood, and is necessary to both the being and the well being of the Church; there can be no Church without it. They are essential to catholicity. Those who are without an episcopal ministry properly ordained or

¹³ See "Religious Bodies," 1926; Bureau of the Census, Vol. II, p. 1269.

consecrated are not of the Church; and they have no right, of course, to think or speak of themselves as catholic; which, indeed, they have as yet no desire to do only with a very different meaning of the term.

It is to be noted and remarked that those who arrogate to themselves the use of the name "Catholic" and deny it to others are the least catholic in their definition of the Church, inasmuch as by their definition millions of true believers in Christ Jesus are excluded from the catholic church; whereas, those who do not so much affect or seek to appropriate the name Catholic have a definition for the church which permits them to believe with gladness that many millions of those who plume themselves upon being Catholic, to the exclusion of other good Christians, do nevertheless belong to the catholic church. Here is the larger definition: "The Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers,"¹⁴ wheresoever God doth find them. These, then, turn out to be the most catholic, in spirit, in point of numbers, and in the matter of their diffusion throughout the earth. They count in all true believers of every place and time; the circle which they draw is the widest and most inclusive; and this brings us back to that fine conception and compact statement of Ignatius, which he had done well to leave alone: "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church."

The exclusiveness of the arrogant ones appears all the more uncharitable since to their narrow definition of the Church they have been wont to add the unmer-

¹⁴ Augsburg Confession, Art. VIII.

ciful judgment that none can be saved outside of it—*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that among those who by profession adhere to the broader definition there are none who in practice show as little charity as the others. There are too many such. Some of them go so far as to excommunicate others of the same confession of faith, refusing pulpit and altar fellowship with them, because of differences between them in regard to matters which do not involve any question of morals or any denial of the faith, but which in reality involve only the question, whether we must conform our practice to legalistic principles or be governed by the law of Christian liberty. It may be a real Christian service to those who thus think it a mark of their special loyalty to Christ and His Word to withhold fellowship on such grounds, to recommend to them a serious consideration of the words addressed by Fermilian of Cæsarea to Stephen of Rome, when the latter excommunicated Cyprian and other bishops East and West because they did not agree with him on the subject of heretical baptism: "How great a sin hast thou heaped up, when thou didst cut thyself off from so many flocks! For while thou thinkest all may be excommunicated by thee, thou hast excommunicated thyself from all."¹⁵

Now the Scripture lays this upon the hearts of Christians: "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."¹⁶ It tells us in terms which sound as if

¹⁵ Ap. Mackenzie, Op. cit. p. 30.

¹⁶ I Peter 4: 8.

meant for our own day, that "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling."¹⁷ And lest we should lean too much to the intellectual element in our faith and to the things which God has in store for us yonder, and set too low a value on the homelier and less sophisticated virtue of love, it says: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."¹⁸

Now to invite people into a church which excludes from its fellowship any who believe in Christ, who have His Spirit and do His works, shows that those by whom this is done are lacking in charity,—that thing which is greatest,—and that they are under bondage to some evil psychosis which warps the judgment and chills the heart to deadness. They are not proving that liberty which frees from the ego. And to follow such teachers and leaders expecting to be accounted righteous before God by this Pharisaism is to refuse or turn aside from the freedom which Christ, in utmost love and troth, offers to faith alone; and to accept in its stead a cheap and unwarranted substitute, an ecclesiasticism or orthodoxy which is at least in great danger of being utterly lifeless and without the Spirit. Many there are, we believe and are sure, who, though caught in the toils of such an ecclesiasticism, do not in reality assent to its hard and uncharitable "rules," nor think that they gain merit with God by observing them. If they keep them they do it because

¹⁷ I Tim. 1: 5, 6.

¹⁸ I Cor. 13: 13.

they must. When it comes to the final need they cast all this aside. It counts for nothing for the obtaining of freedom from sin and salvation. Christ alone freely gives them what they need, because they trust in Him. Many of them rise in spirit above the system in which their lives unhappily have been cast. Under the power of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit they know the love of Christ, and have learned even under an evil and repressive tutelage to love all who are His.

It must have occurred to the reader before this that little note has been taken of the difference between the spirit and the form of catholicity, between the visible and the invisible. Henceforward we shall have to do more especially with the organized Church. To this no group of Christians can properly be indifferent.

For what remains, it will be helpful to fix in mind that unity and catholicity are essentially one and the same. At least they are so closely related that there can be no unity of the Church as a whole without catholicity; neither can there be catholicity without unity. These two differ from each other only in the form of conception. Catholicity envisages the entirety as made up of all the parts; unity contemplates the parts as constituting one whole.

Unity and catholicity as attributes of the Church pertain first of all to the realm of the spirit. Then they apply also to the form which the spirit within tends to take unto itself, that is, to the Church in so far as it becomes organized. As there is and can be but one Church of Christ, it must be admitted that ideally the inner unity should somehow manifest itself outwardly

to the world. This can be done only by some form of organization, however constituted and whatever limitations may be set to its powers. The organization must not be so articulated or constructed as to appear to be the essential thing, or to veil and stifle the spirit; but it must be such as to be ready at all times for the spirit's use. It must also stand for the maintenance of the true Christian faith and life. If our principles, as set forth in preceding chapters are true, the organization should have to be effected, and its functions discharged, in the spirit of Christian liberty. Christian liberty must never be permitted to perish from the earth. If it does, then Christ died in vain; He has become of no effect to us, and we must work out our own salvation as best we can, or else have others less dependable than He take care of it for us. This liberty is worth standing alone for, if it has to be.

Organization means that there must be government; and government implies two classes of people, the governed and those who perform the duties of government. There must be authority also; and this is usually lodged in the hands of officials. Besides, there must be some standard to which the officials and those over whom they bear rule may alike appeal as final. Force cannot be employed. The standard must be one which grips the conscience and moves all to act freely in love of the truth. Those usually called Protestants, though millions of them still are evangelic catholic Christians, know of no ultimate standard of faith and morals other than the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

The government must not be oppressive and tyrannical. It must not exist, or seem to exist, for its own sake, or for the sake of those who sit in the seat of authority. It must be administered in love for the good of all and for the furtherance of the Gospel. It must aim at producing and developing such a spirit and life as that the people will need only counsel and direction, and having this will rejoice to run in the ways of the Lord.

Officers, teachers and leaders must set the example in faith, in patience, in self-control, in humility, in love and service. They must daily strive to illustrate the life that is Christian liberty, the spirit that is fair, that does not desire or seek to put anything over on another, that trusts others as it would be trusted by them, that can make another's cause its own, and rejoice as much when another man's way proves right as when one's own is accorded the preference. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."¹⁹ "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."²⁰ Authority and leadership in the church is a great privilege, but the peril of it to one's own spirit of humility and integrity may be equally great. To offi-

¹⁹ Phil. 2: 4.

²⁰ Mark 10: 42-45.

cial is rightly entrusted leadership. The leaders, therefore, must think for the whole Church, and seek Christ's way for it and not some other.

What has been said of officials applies also to the rank and file, if we may so speak of the folk as distinguished from their leaders. Each and every member of the Christian community should follow the good example of the officials and leaders. Every one must illustrate the life that is Christian liberty, must show that in Christ he is made a son of God, "a perfectly free lord of all subject to none" and "a perfectly dutiful servant of all subject to all." And to be a servant of all subject to all is just as necessary to one's full freedom as the other. If any man regards himself simply as a microcosm he has an incomplete view of himself and his place in the world and in the Church. When God said "It is not good that the man should be alone,"²¹ He had more in mind than simply to provide a wife for him. The thought included the wider conception of the social nature and needs of man. "None of us liveth to himself,"²² is true whether in one's relation to God or to fellowman. The Christian belongs to and is part of a whole. He is set in a universe; indeed, in many universes which may be represented by a series of concentric circles. Leaving behind the conception of himself as a microcosm, the first universe in which he finds himself is the home. In the case of the newly married couple this universe is that which is made up of the man and his wife. When children come, it is enlarged to the whole family group.

²¹ Gen. 2: 18.

²² Rom. 14: 7.

Being baptized into the Church, he enters a still larger universe which is first the congregation, and then the association of congregations in the synod, and again the larger association of which the synod forms a part. In each and every universe he must prove himself "the Lord's free man" and "Christ's servant."²³ He must think thus of himself; Christ has made me free in the very largest sense of the word,—free from sin and self, from coded law, from priesthood and sacrifice, except the oblation of my poor self, which will be accepted, however, through Christ. He has made me free that I might not be a slave to anything or any one, not even to self, and that I may love, and live my life in fullest service to Him and my fellowman. It is mine to exercise and prove my liberty in faith, in love, and in life for the benefit of the whole, of every universe to which I belong. This is Christian Liberty.

In the same way that every individual Christian should think of himself in relation to his several universes, so ought every group, large and small, think of itself in relation to other groups. No synod or group of whatever name can rightly conceive of itself as a microcosm, a world or a church unto itself. If it does so it denies its catholicity and brands itself sectarian. The principle of Christian liberty cannot be invoked in favour of separation unless separation be necessary for the preservation of the fundamental truth of the Gospel.

It is a high privilege and solemn duty for every body that calls itself a church to help to integrate. This is

²³ I Cor. 7: 22.

not to say, as should be clear from the foregoing pages, that integration of all the groups into one organic whole should be sought regardless of faith and doctrine. Neither does it imply that individual congregations, pastors or laymen should act in this matter independently of the provisions of the Communion to which they belong. A truly catholic church, one entitled to the name of the one, holy, universal church, must be a church of the truth as it has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus and set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It must be a conservator of that truth and of the liberty which Christ came to bestow upon men. It must publish the truth which makes men free unto the uttermost parts of the earth, and seek to vitalize men with the power of the Spirit. In this sense every congregation may be a catholic church; just as the faithful of Smyrna, in their Epistle Concerning the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, did not hesitate to speak of him as "the bishop of the catholic church which is in Smyrna."²⁴ But to build out of all such churches of the truth one holy, catholic, Christian Church, or to contribute thereto, though it be but in small share, is a cause worthy to engage the powers of any man or any group of men who hold the truth as it is in Jesus. And the best way to begin is for those first to come together who confess one and the same faith, and who have a common heritage of history, of life and of worship.

²⁴ Chap. XVI. It matters not even if this be an interpolation, as some think. It is at any rate a very early designation of a particular congregation as catholic.

The cause cannot succeed without God's guidance and help. As a most suitable way to seek this, and a way that is commended to us by the promise of our Lord, we propose the following from *The Bidding Prayer*.

Brethren, let us pray for the whole *Christian Church*, that our Lord God would vouchsafe to defend it against all the assaults and temptations of the adversary, and to keep it perpetually upon the true foundation, Jesus Christ.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, Who hast revealed Thy glory to all nations in Jesus Christ and the word of His truth: Keep we beseech Thee, in safety the works of Thy mercy, that so Thy Church, spread throughout all nations, may serve Thee in true faith, and persevere in the confession of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

INDEX

- Absolution, 182
 Ælia (Jerusalem), 134
 Alexandria, Church in, 142, 152, 158
 Anarchism, 59
 "A new Creature," 28
 Anglo-Catholics, 162
 Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, 156
 Antinomianism, 22, 26, 42, 44
 Antioch, 122, 125, 129, 131, 137
 "Apostles and elders," 125, 131, 133, 144
 Apostles; as leaders, 118, 125; equals, 94; free to organize, 113f., 115, 118
 Apostolic succession, 115f.
 Aquila, 141
 Asia Minor, 143, 156
 Athanasius, 23f.
 Atonement, 50, 102
 Augsburg Confession, 78
 Augsburg Confession, Article VII, 116
 Augustine, St., 16, 24, 25
 Authority, Standard of, 194

 "Babylonian Captivity of the Church," 24, 26
 Barnabas, Epistle of, 173
 Believer, Change in his status, 40f.
 Bibliolatry, 81
 Bishops; a plurality of in churches, 138; equality of, 144
 Bossuet, 71
 Byzantium, Church in, 150

 Callistus, schism of, 156
 Calvin, John, 63, 78
 Canon law, 77

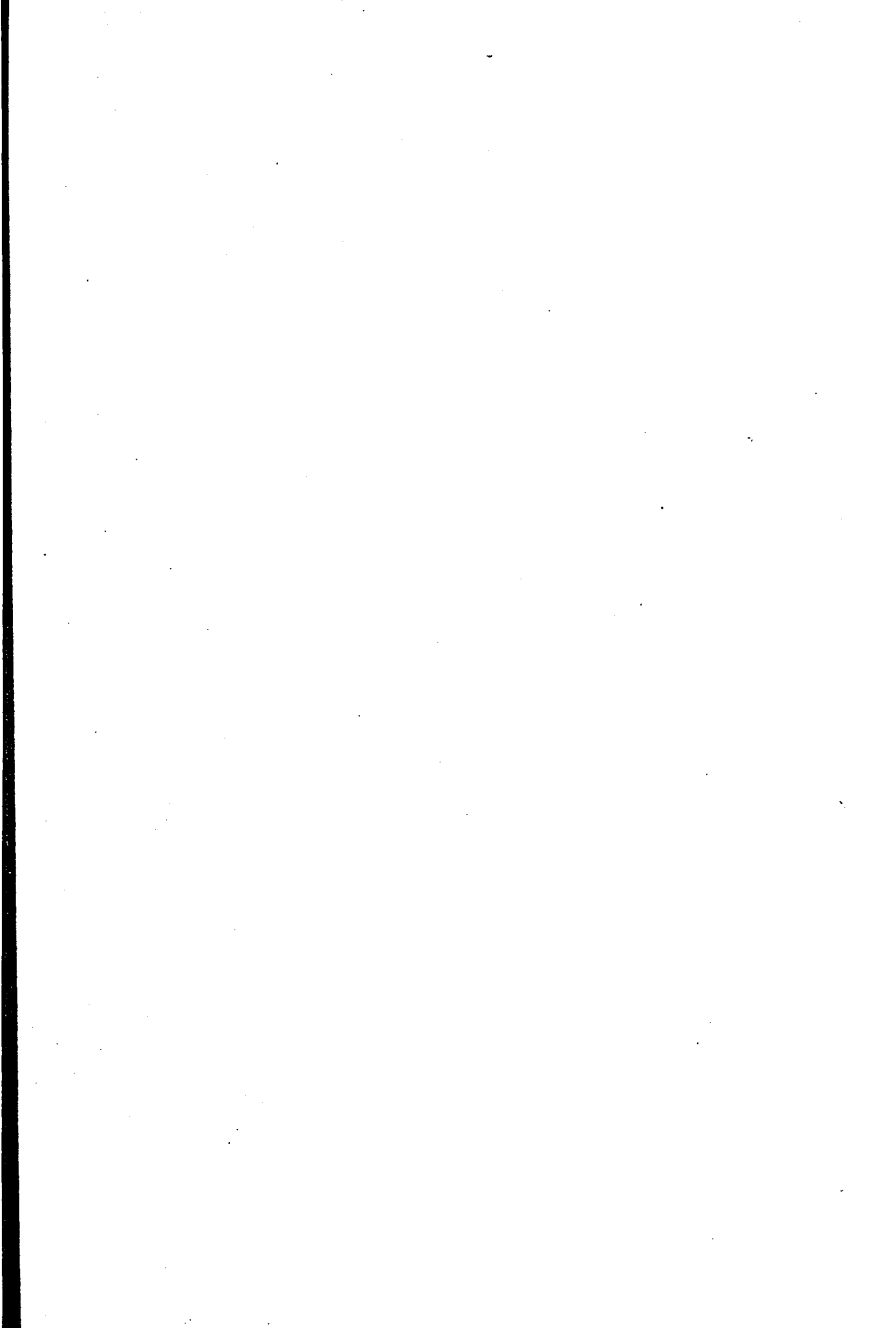
 Catholicity and unity essentially one, 193
 Catholicity; in the Reformation, 188; of the church, 148; varying views of, 183-191
 — in organization and in spirit, 192-199; on the part of officials, 195; on the part of the people, 196
 Charity, 66, 191f.
 Charles V, 82
 Christ; God in, 39; Captain of salvation, 54; end of the law, 33; High Priest, 52-54, 167; His sacrifice, 117; His teaching new, 126; the keynote of His preaching, 126; what brought Him to the cross, 127
 — and Moses, 126
 — all distinctions abolished in, 105; the magnet, reconciler, peacemaker, 105
 Christianity and Judaism, 126
 Christianity, a *religio illicita*, 143
 Christian liberty; an attribute of a distinctive life, 27, 28; a new concept, 17, 48; an exotic in the world, 22, 23; as a gift, 83; in its active character, 38, 83
 — — — an organizing principle, 112
 — — — essential elements of, 112
 — — — how it behaves; alike in all, 56; charitably, 65f.; confidingly, 72; constructively, 59; courageously, 81; fraternally, 68; freely, 57; imper-

- fectly, 45, 83; jealously, 74;
joyously, 60; obligingly, 71;
orderly, 59; purposively, 59;
socially, 70; tolerantly, 73;
truthfully, 71; unselfishly, 73
- — — how obtained, 46
- — — is freedom from the
law, 32; from remorse and
despair, 31; from sin, 30
- — — masculine traits of, 74
- — — not disintegrating,
112
- — — spiritual, 28f.
- — — the compendium of
Christ's gifts, 54
- Christians; empire-minded, 153,
155; expected Christ's return,
144; gatherings of early, 115,
118; Jewish-minded, 154; per-
secution of, 143
- Christian unity; essential condi-
tions of, 111; movements for,
87
- Church; a living, growing thing,
91; heretical tendencies within,
147; it has liberty to change,
139
- Churches; *reunion of*, 140; men-
tioned in New Testament, 141
- Church government local at first,
141, 143, 144, 146
- Circumcision, 122, 126
- Clement of Alexandria, 23, 142
- Clement of Rome, 42, 136, 138,
145, 154, 173, 175, 185
- Confessions, 81
- Conscience, 36, 79f.
- Consecration, 116, 120
- Constantine, 150, 151, 152
- Constantinople, Council of, 150
- Church in, 150; patriarch-
ate of, 152
- Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, 158
- Cornelius, the Roman centurion,
129, 131
- Corporate unity; one that is
spiritual and invisible, 111; the
for which Christ prayed, 110
- Courage, not obstinacy, 82f.
- Cynics, 20
- Cyprian, 157, 185
- Didache, The, 172
- Divisions; Church never free
from them, 89; referred to in
Paul's Epistles, 89
- Easter, controversy concerning,
156
- Ebionites, 147
- Ecclesiasticism, 26
- Einstein, 183
- Emancipation, 47, 49
- Empire, The; Constantine's divi-
sions of, 152
- Epicureans, 20
- Episcopacy; as a form of govern-
ment, 161, 162; as an order of
grace, etc., 162; reasons for
the triumph of, 153, 162
- Episcopal Orders, 78
- Eternal life; Christ's definition
of, 93, 104
- External unity and Christian
liberty, 108, 109
- Eucharist, 165, 168, 172, 174,
176, 178, 180
- Eusebius, 142
- Excommunication, 187, 191
- Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, 191
- Fate, 62
- Felicissimus, Schism of, 157
- Fellowship, 78, 192
- Fermilian of Casarea, 191
- — — rebukes Pope Stephen,
191
- Fortunatus, 157
- Freedom; in human relations,
35; in relation to God, 35
- — — ours in a twofold way, 34,
49
- — — by purchase, 34, 49
- — — to assert and use,
34, 49
- Gentile Church, the, 20

- Gnosticism, 22, 147
 Government, 194
 Greco-Roman civilization, 20
- Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, 163
 Hedonism, 44
 Heraclea, 150
 Heretical baptism, 186, 187
 Hermas, 138, 173, 174
 Herod Agrippa I, 121
 ——— slays James the brother of John, 121
 Hierarchy, not instituted by Christ, 116
- Iconoclasm, 59
 Idols, things offered to, 59
 Ignatius, 173, 176, 184
 Individualism, 26, 59
 Inhibitions, 60, 67
 Inquisitional methods, 78
 Instincts, 37
 "Institutes of the Christian Religion," Calvin's, 64
 Institutionalism, 26
 Integration, 197
 Intimidation, 76
 Irenæus, 156, 169, 173, 178
- James; "bishop" of Jerusalem, 123, 133; character of, 122; death of, 125
 — his Mosaic bias, 132; his several appearances, 131
 — how he obtained leadership, 126, 130; surnamed the Just, 122; when he rose to eminence, 124
 — "Tell these things unto," 121, 130
 — the Lord's brother, 121, 123
 James and Paul, 132, 134
 Jerusalem; Church at Jewish, 125; Church in, after 70 A. D., 134; Church order in, 135; fall of (70 A. D.), 134; parties in the church, 122, 125, 129, 131; patriarchate, 152; seven officials chosen, 88, 118f.; synod, 121
 Jesus' brethren, 120
 Jesus; His exercise of liberty, 13; the Liberator, 15, 50, 82; the Prophet of liberty, 14, 127
 Jew and Greek have access to God in Christ, 106
 Jewish Christians, 19
 Jews; nationalists in politics, 17; in religion, 18
 John, silence of as to Orders, 115
 John the Baptist, 18
 Judaism and Christianity, 126
 Judas, 116, 118
 Justin Martyr, 173, 177
- Laity, the, 119
 Lapsi, treatment of, 157
 Law; Christ's fulfilment, 32, 33, 50; spirit above the letter, 127; the Christian's new relation to, 33, 42
 Laying on of hands, 116, 119, 137
 Legalism, 22, 25, 26, 42, 44, 76
 Legalists, 76, 79
 Leo X, Pope, 27
 Letter and spirit, 81
 Liberty and love, 67
 Liberty; better than bondage, 136; choice necessary to, 66; civil, 48; dangerous, 136; misuse of, 43; personal, 48; political, 47; religious, 46
 Life; a distinctive, 27
 Liturgies, early, 114
 Lord's Supper, 113, 114, 117
 — institution of, 165
 Love; freedom an essential attribute of, 40; the heart and soul of Christian liberty, 44; the moving power in both liberty and unity, 110
 Luther, 17, 24, 25, 27, 45, 82
 Lutheran Church, organization in, 160, 163

- Luther's Small Catechism, 55
 ——— Treatise on Christian Liberty 17, 26
- Mackenzie, K. D., 158, 191
- Martyrs, 82
- Matthew, silence of as to Orders, 115
- Matthias, chosen to the apostolate, 116, 118
- Meletius, schism of, 158
- Metropolitans, rise of, 151
- Morals, changing values in the realm of, 91f.
- Monarchic episcopacy, 139, 149
- Moses and Christ, 126
- Movements for Christian unity, 87
- New Covenant, 117, 167
- New Testament, its writers not to be discredited, 115
- Nicæa, Council of, 152, 158
- Nomolatriy, 76
- Novatian, schism of, 158
- Officials at Jerusalem, 123, 125
- Old Testament, influence of, 170-181
- Order, not prescribed by Christ, 114f., 120
- Order of priests, hypothesis of an unrecorded institution of, 115
- Ordination, 120
- Organization; a free development, 118, 120, 136, 137, 139; Christian liberty, how affected by, 153; first attempt at by apostles, 115; in the Church at Jerusalem, 115, 120, 135; Lutheran view of, 160, 163; no particular form necessary, 109, 113, 139, 159
- Origen, 23, 142
- Orosius, Paulus, 143
- Pantænus, 143
- Papias, 123
- Patriarchs, 150, 152
- Party of the circumcision, head of, 129
- Paul, 16, 17, 23, 33, 50, 59; appoints presbyters, 137; as an organizer, 154; in Jerusalem after his conversion, 128; sent to Tarsus, 129; speaks of bishops and presbyters, 137, 138, 161
- Paul and Barnabas, 128, 131, 132, 137
- Paul and James, 121, 122, 125, 131-134
- Pelagianism, 24
- Peter and James, 121, 125, 133
- Peter, 16, 130, 132; dissimulation of, 130; escape of, 121; imprisoned, 121; leader and spokesman, 120
- Philosophy, 20-23
- Pliny, the younger, 21
- Polycarp, 145, 156
- Pope, the name, 153
- "Practice," 76, 78, 79
- Prayer of the Lord for unity, 92, 94, 103, 104; church not mentioned, 94
- Predestination, 62, 64
- Presbyter and bishop, interchangeable, 149, 161
- Presbyter-bishop, 138, 149
- Presbyters (Elders), 124; reasons for appointment of, 126; when they first appear, 125
- Prince of Conde, 71
- Priesthood; New Testament idea of, 164-170; of the ministry, 116, 118
 ——— a sacrificing, 170ff., 181; Christian liberty, how affected by, 164, 182
- Priests, 117
- Primus inter pares*, 94, 149
- Prisca, 141
- "Prophets and teachers" at Antioch, 137
- Psychology of early Christian centuries, 169-182

- Psychoses, 60, 72, 192
 Puritanism, 62
 Reformation, 25
Regula Fidei, 148
 Relativity, 183
 Religious movements in early times, 147, 148
Reunion of the Churches, a misleading expression, 140
 Roman citizenship, 48
 Royal Law, The, 44
 "Rules," 76, 77, 192
 Sacerdotalism, 77
 Sacrifice; growth of the idea in the Church, 173-181; New Testament idea of, 166-170; of the New Covenant, 117
 Sacrifices of O. T., 117
 Sanhedrin, 82
 Schismatic spirit, 82
 Schismatics, retained episcopacy, 159
 Schisms, 89, 157
 Secrecy, 72
Sedes apostolicæ, 152
 Self-control, 38, 59
 Self-sufficiency, human, 26
 Sermon on the Mount, 32, 127
 Servetus, 64, 65
Shepherd, The; of Hermas, 138, 173, 174
 Slaves; emancipation of, 47; manumission of, 49
 Soderblom, Archbishop, 163
 Sonship, 39
 Sovereignty of God, 64
 Spiritual unity; manifestations of, 94, 104, 111; meaning of, 95, 96
 Stephen I, bishop of Rome, 186; rebuked by Fermilian, 191
 Stephen the martyr, 15
 Stoics, 20
 Streeter, H. B., 135, 138
 Symbolatry, 81
 Synergism, 24
 Synods, Provincial, 151
 Tarsus, Paul sent away to, 129
 "That they all may be one," 94, 95
The Lord our Righteousness, 52
 Theocracy, 63
 Traditionalism, 76
 Traditions, 58, 77
 Trajan, 143
 "Uncircumcision, The," 131
Unitas in libertate et in unitate libertas, 111
 United Lutheran Church in America, The, 79
 Unity and catholicity, essentially one, 193
 Unity; an ideal which is fugitive, 91; as taught in the Acts and Epistles, 104f.; in externals not essential, 109; in the early church, 144, 148; is social and brings people together, 110; must it be sought at the end of the rainbow?, 90; necessity of inner, 110; not a *fait accompli*, 91; not to be despaired of, 91; of organization not combatted, 108, 110; outward expression of, 147; picture of in Jerusalem, 87, 105, 128; prayed for by all parties, 89f.; prayer of the Lord for, 92; yearning for among Christians, 87
 Victor, bishop of Rome, 156
 Vincent of Lerins, 184
 World Conference on Faith and Order, 87





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